

## Mountain Man – Chapter 19 – Rising Waters

There was no way to get another cabin like the four they already had. The contractor came out and put in the basement and tunnel for Ryan and Jennifer's home and the four older men found a very nice doublewide mobile home built with 6" studs. The mobile home went in a whole lot faster than the cabins anyway.

Ryan started out using a cane to walk, but by midsummer he had cast it aside. They got everyone they could to help and put up 30 cords of firewood for the couple as well as replacing the firewood they had consumed. They couldn't get food from Walton Feed anymore either, but the food kept so well, they just stopped rotating it into their food supply.

A small group of the inmates who had escaped from the prison in Riverton made a stab at Jackson, but the Police and Sheriff's Department took them out in short order. Ryan had a \$2 million education. It cost the government about \$1 million to put a student through West Point. Then there was all of additional training the man had received. There wasn't much that Ryan Williams couldn't do, from a military point of view.

Well, except be in the military, I suppose. Those surgeons at Walter Reed had done a wonderful job rebuilding his knee. But, even for all of their skills, Ryan came up a little short and had been forced out of the military. It was a stinking shame. On the other hand, it benefited the residents of the acreage tremendously.

"The more things change, the more they stay the same," Ray thought, thinking about what had happened to Ryan and the country.

Ray had become a real cowboy over the years. He still wore the hat that Stacy gave him. He walked around with the Colt strapped on. He'd never taken up chewing tobacco, but he stuck a cigar in his mouth and rarely lit it, preferring to chew it to death.

Ryan and Jennifer were making up for lost time and Jennifer was already expecting. The herd of horses had grown nicely, especially with those Michael brought over and there were enough horses for everyone to ride. Ryan hadn't sat a horse for quite a spell, but it didn't take him long to get back to sitting a saddle pretty good.

Before fall came on, the entire group had made a couple of saddleback camping trips into the foothills of the Teton's. The year was 2012. Wasn't that the year that that preacher Pat Robertson said the world was going to end? Maybe Robertson got that from the fact that the Mayan calendar ended in 2012.

Ray didn't think much of those televangelists. Ray hadn't seen any local churches going out of business when Jim Bakker went off to prison or when Jimmy Swaggart confessed his sins to the world. The true religions will survive, in spite of the con artists who try to take advantage of the public's yearning for spiritual comfort.

Old paint face Tammy Faye Bakker had divorced Jim and remarried, only to die of cancer. There was a testament. Tammy was probably a beautiful woman at one time, but her vanity had gotten the best of her. She'd paid in the end, just like we all do. At least Robertson's first name wasn't Jim.

How many times had someone predicted the end of the world? Hundreds? Thousands? More? Well, we were still here and the world was still here with all of its imperfections.

"Yep," Ray thought, "America is becoming a wasteland, brought down from within, rather than from without."

But there was hope. There was always hope. Jennifer was expecting and Crystal was pregnant again. Ray was thinking, too, that that excursion into Jackson Hole by those cons was getting just a little too near to home.

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Like it or not, they were going to have to beef up security one more time. Ray made a list of things that they needed. More motion sensors, more wire for the motion sensors, more lights for the display panel, more old nuts and bolts, more explosives because the C-4 was getting low, more wire for the detonators, and more detonators. More, more, more, it was starting to get frustrating.

But, did they have a choice, Ray asked himself. If a bunch of cons had made it to Jackson, how much longer would it be before they made the extra 30 miles to the acreage? There were two choices, hope it didn't happen or prepare for it in case it did. Preparations had seen them this far, so preparation was the only option.

Ray made copies of the list and Scott and Ron left in one truck, Ryan and Michael left in a second and Ray and his love left in the third. Each pair was supposed to get certain items on the list. Ron and Scott would take care of all things explosive. Michael and Ryan would take care of the security items and Stacy and he would get the bolts and nuts and anything else he might have forgotten.

Once in Jackson, they went to a junkyard and bought 20 5-gallon pails of rusty old bolts and nuts. Ray was driving down the street when he saw a sign that said Business Radios. Ray didn't know how business radios differed from any other radios, but he decided to find out.

The guy was a Motorola dealer and he sold VHF and UHF radios used by people such as plumbers and the like. The handheld radios he had in stock were all old used radios; Ray clearly wasn't the first customer to check him out.

But, he had a lot of the old Radius P-50, 2-channel handheld 4-watt radios and quite a few of the more expensive 6-channel, 4-watt handhelds that used a computer program to set a frequency synthesizer. Most of the handhelds were the more expensive 6-

channel model. As for the 4-channel, 25-watt mobile units, there too he was down to a bunch of used radios.

Stacy and Ray talked about it (argued) at some length right there in front of that poor dealer. Stacy wanted to go for the 6-channel radios and get the computer program and interface for Ray's computer so they could change the channels randomly. She also wanted a 25-watt radio for each home, each vehicle and one for the radio shack.

Ray wanted to get radios for the vehicles and get the 2-channel handhelds. The dealer wanted to get the hell out of Jackson, yesterday or sooner. He offered them the deal of a lifetime. They could buy him out, lock stock and barrel, including his reprogramming unit and all of his spare parts. But he wanted cash on the barrelhead. A check would do if he could take it somewhere right there in Jackson and cash it.

The cincher was that the dealer would stay in Jackson long enough to set up the 2-channel radios to the same two frequencies. This was no small matter, he explained, the P-50's used crystals and you almost need a magnifying glass to change the crystals. The price the guy offered was too good for Ray and Stacy to resist.

They thought the guy was nuts for wanting to leave Jackson, but they would pay the asking price. Stacy left to cash a check on her Money Market account and Ray stayed and watched as the guy began to swap out the crystals so all of the 2-channel radios were on the same 2 channels. Stacy was back with the money before the man had finished. Ray figured he could make the crystal swaps in a pinch if he had to. The guy had all kinds of crystals.

The grateful dealer even set the 6-channel radios with two frequencies to match the crystal radios and four other channels. The 25-watt radios were set to the same two channels plus 2 of the 4 extra channels on the 6-channel handhelds. (Currently: CP-200 4/16 channel and CM-200/300 4/32 channels)

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When they got home, Ray and Stacy sat down and sorted all of the radios into piles. The 25-watt units were all mobile radios using 13.8 volts, but there were 8 power supplies. The guy only had 5 base station antennas, but that would work because Ray could connect his house radio to a base station antenna and his radio shack radio to his Diamond D130J.

They distributed the radios to the cabins and got busy installing the mobile radios in his pickup and Stacy's Cherokee. They were just finishing up when the other guys pulled in. The explosives and detonators hadn't been a problem, but the detonator wire had taken some shopping. Ryan and Michael had had to hunt for motion detectors AND wire, but they too had finally found what they needed.

Stacy had the hang of installing the mobile radios and magnetic base mobile antennas so she did that the next day while the men strung the wire and Ron fabricated more of the Claymores. It worked out about right in the end. Ron could throw together the improvised Claymore a lot faster than they could string wire and they finished up at the end of the third day with the explosives and motion detectors installed and the wire strung to the shelter.

They put the wires in a shallow trench so the livestock wouldn't damage them. The radios came in very handy when they went to wire up the motion sensors to the panel. Somehow some of the wires got mismarked and they used the radios to sort out the mess. When they were done, they had a panel with a square of lights on it representing all of the motion detectors. Their perimeter was secure.

The radio dealer and his wife and family had made it to Bondurant, WY (45 miles) before being attacked by a group of cons and killed. The wife and 14-year-old daughter, for obvious reasons, were the last to die and they welcomed death when it finally came.

Despite having not done her residency, Jennifer was a pretty fair doctor. She had the book learning from medical school and the experience from Africa to draw on. She worked at the hospital in Jackson as a Physician's Assistant and rounded out her skills. She wasn't a doctor, and probably never would be, but she was as skillful as the doctors there in Jackson by the time Ron and Ray called a halt to her commuting to town. It was time to quit anyway, because she was showing fairly good. One of the advantages to working as a PA was that Jennifer was able to round out the medical supplies they had stocked.

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If Ryan had any bitterness over being booted from the Army, Ray couldn't see it. The truth was even simpler. Ryan had been worried sick with Jennifer being at Brown and him in Georgia. Then, the transfer to Ft. Campbell made it worse. In a way, the disabling wound had been a blessing. His wife was safely by his side and he could finally protect her. He'd regained nearly full use of his leg, too.

The Army had given him a 40% disability and the checks, though small, provided for their needs. Way back when he'd decided to go to West Point, Jennifer had just been his study partner and the US had been a pretty safe place. Now, Jennifer was his wife and the mother of their unborn child and the US wasn't a safe place anymore.

President Kerry was glad that his presidency was ending. The past four years had been an unmitigated disaster. The first four years had been bad enough with the power outage, the riots and the attack on the water supply. The second four years saw 31 million (final count) Americans die at the hand of terrorists.

Maybe he and the late Senator Kennedy had been wrong all along. Among the victims of the viral attack had been Senator Clinton, she had been 'too busy' to get her vaccina-

tion, and Senator Schumer, he was off on vacation in Europe and never made it back. Senator Kennedy had died of brain cancer, a painful death that doctors attributed to his alcoholism.

Colin Powell had been right; Kerry's record assured his, Powell's, election in November of 2012. Kerry had the country in such a mess, he wasn't sure that he wanted the job when it came right down to it, but Alma said he could run and he had begun to campaign early. The polls showed him with as much as 80% of the popular vote. Even the Republicans fully supported his candidacy, including, believe it or not, John McCain, the former Secretary of Defense during Kerry's first term.

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If they hadn't runs drills, Ray would have never realized what that awful noise was that woke him in the middle of the night. Not for a minute or two, anyway. By the time he got his pants on and down to the shelter to look at the panel, all of the men were in the shelter getting grenades and extra magazines for their rifles. They had an intrusion on the south property line. He tripped the Claymore wannabe's on either side of the motion sensor and grabbed his Barrett because of its night optics.

They had several pairs of 2nd generation night vision binoculars and they quickly spotted the intruders. They had gotten past the mines before Ray could set them off. There were only a dozen or so people, he couldn't tell if they were men or women, but they were carrying rifles and approaching Ryan's home.

The women joined them moments later armed to the teeth. Ray carefully opened the door and all but Rosemary and Jennifer crawled out of the door on their bellies. Scott and Ray both had the night optics on their .50 caliber rifles and the boom of the magnificent cannons was met with cries from two of the intruders. They rolled, lined up and fired again and two more of the intruders fell to the .50BMG match ammunition. Ray yelled "Lights" and Jennifer flipped on the flood lamps. The flood lamps mounted on the cabins temporarily blinded the intruders and they went down in a hail of fire from the residents.

They had instant payback for the hundreds of hours and thousands of rounds of ammunition they had expended over the years. Rosemary had been left in the cabin to protect Jennifer, and they were both angry at having been excluded. Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time, but Ray wouldn't make that mistake again. Jennifer had a temper that matched that of his redheaded wife.

Everyone was wide-awake now; there would be no sleep for the remainder of the night. Stacy put on a large pot of coffee and they all gathered in the Great Room in Ray and Stacy's cabin. It was obvious that they had a hole in their security preparations; the improvised Claymores had exploded, but had done no harm to the intruders.

In what amounted to an after-action analysis, they concluded that the delay between the alarm going off and Ray's detonating the mines had prevented the mines from doing what was intended. If the system, was broken so they had to fix it. They considered several approaches including keeping someone on duty 24/7 in the shelter and creating an early warning system.

The road passed the entire southern perimeter to the property and the early warning system won out and would be implemented first. They had 6 motion sensors left as spares, so they decided to wire a pair together about a quarter mile in either direction, placing sensors on each side of the road in both locations.

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They had work to do; they needed to replace the expended mines and install the sensors. But, before they could do that, they had the grisly task of searching the bodies, recovering anything useful and then disposing of the bodies. Ray and Scott volunteered to take care of the bodies, Ron would replace the mines and Ryan and Michael would see to the new sensors.

Stacy and Susan would go to Jackson and come up with enough wire to connect the additional motion sensors. They also decided that Jennifer and Rosemary should go with them to Jackson because Jennifer had had some cramps and they thought she should see a doctor. At first light, they set about the various tasks.

Ray and Scott examined the bodies. There were the four clean one-shot kills they had made with the .50 caliber rifles. Dang, that .50BMG round was destructive, wasn't it? The 631gr and 750gr FMJ bullets really did a number on those intruders. The other bodies were in far better condition.

They checked the pockets but could find no wallets or ID. The excessive numbers of 'prison tattoos' told them all they needed to know about the intruders. The cons had a mish-mash of guns, but only the 2 FAL's and one shotgun were worth keeping, they didn't have ammo for all of the various calibers. Since they had no excavation equipment to dig a mass grave, Scott and Ray decided to load the bodies back into the two vans they had come in and transport them to the Sheriff's Department.

Understand, the two men didn't give a rat's ass about reporting the shootings, but they had no way to dispose of the bodies and the Sheriff could ID the men and scratch their names off the list of escaped convicts. The Sheriff could also handle the disposal of the bodies.

They raised Stacy on the truck radio and told her to pick them up at the Sheriff's Department when the women were finished with what they were doing. One of the vans was out of gas, had this been the reason the men had attacked them? Scott put just enough gas in the van to get it to town and they set off.

When they arrived in Jackson and announced to the Sheriff that they had a dozen bodies in the vans, they had to endure a brief but thorough period of questioning. Satisfied with their explanation, the Sheriff had two deputies take charge of the bodies and sat down to visit with Scott and Ray over a cup of coffee.

"We've been experiencing more and more of this," the Sheriff said. "You wouldn't think we would, being Jackson Hole is at the end of the world, but the number of intrusions is definitely on the rise."

"We have a defensive perimeter set up Sheriff," Ray explained. "But it has some holes in it. They were on us almost before we could respond."

"You're doing something about that, I presume?" the Sheriff inquired.

"We're making an adjustment, yes," Scott responded.

"My deputies tell me you have quite the community going out there, what is it 4 cabins?" the Sheriff asked.

"Five now with Ryan and Jennifer back in town," Ray offered.

"You broke more than one heart here in Jackson when you married Stacy," the Sheriff recalled.

"She's quite the woman, that's for sure," Ray acknowledged. "Ryan and Jennifer are expecting their first child soon. Rosemary and Jennifer are at the hospital getting Jennifer checked out."

"No problems, I hope," the Sheriff said.

"Hopefully not," Ray said. "She had some contractions, perhaps due to the excitement and we all figured a doctor should check her out."

"Let's hope she's ok," the Sheriff agreed. "Look, the next time you're due for a check, I think I'll come out myself instead of sending a Deputy. I've got some health issues and the doctors are telling me that I have to retire."

"Same thing happened to Ron, Sheriff," Scott said. "He got out on the acreage, takes his medicine and gets plenty of exercise. He's in excellent health now."

The Sheriff's intercom line buzzed and he took the call.

"The women are here to pick you up," the Sheriff said. "I'll be out one of these days to see you folks."

“Thanks for everything Sheriff,” Ray said and the men left to join the women and return to the acreage.

“Is Jennifer ok?” Ray asked.

“She’s fine Ray,” Stacy said. “It was just the excitement.”

“Did you have any trouble finding wire?” Scott asked.

“A little,” Susan said, “But Stacy went to work on the guy at the alarm company wiggling her butt and batting those green eyes of hers and he sold us more than we can ever use.”

“That’s my girl,” Ray laughed, “Charm his socks off did you?”

“No,” Stacy said. “But I was getting quite a rise out of the guy.”

“Yeah, I’ll bet you were,” Ray thought to himself.

When they got back to the acreage, Ron had replaced the Claymores. Ryan and Michael had installed the sensors and had added additional lights to the panel. All they had to do was wire in the motion sensors and test the system.

Ray went to the bedroom when they were done. Ryan and Michael would randomly trip one of the sensor arrays and Ray would rush to the shelter. In every case he made it to the panel before the perimeter light came on indicating an intrusion. The upgrades to their system were more than adequate.

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The FALs were filthy, but otherwise in good condition. Each of the men had had a knapsack of loaded magazines for the weapons. They unloaded the magazines and cleaned the rifles. The shotgun was a Mossberg 590A1 with a 20” barrel and a 9 shot capacity. It too was filthy but in otherwise good condition. Ron pitched in and cleaned the shotgun. Did they mind if he kept the shotgun, he asked. Not at all, they said.

During the course of their after action discussion, the subject of night optics had come up. There was no way they could afford to put night optics on all of the rifles; they cost a fortune. The Raptor was a 3rd generation 4X or 6X riflescope that went for just under \$7,000. The MUNS like Ray had retailed for almost \$11,000 each.

Ray went out on the net and searched that evening after everything else was done. Any way he sliced it, it looked like it would cost him \$500 per rifle, minimum. Then, there was the question of availability. How many of these places were still in business, given all that had happened? He ignored the companies whose websites looked like they hadn’t been maintained in a while and came up with a short list of phone numbers.



When he talked to one company the next morning, they told him he ought to consider red dot sights for his assault rifles and night vision scopes only for his sniper rifles. The red dot units were inexpensive compared to the night vision scopes. The salesman said that they had mounts for every gun around and they could absolutely guarantee delivery. The shipping charges were higher than normal, but if he didn't receive his order, they would either reship or refund his money. Ray selected 3 AN/PVS-10s and 24 of the red dot sights and mounts for the M1As, FALs, and M16's. This would have to do.

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The Internet and the phone system was an on-again-off-again proposition at best. It seemed like one never knew when the phones would be working and when they would not. And, even if the phones were working, sometimes you simply could not get on the Internet. More and more of the websites were falling into disrepair, too. You could pretty much tell the condition of the company by the condition of their website.

And, if that were the standard, there were a lot of companies out there in trouble, a whole lot. True to its word, the vendor delivered the optics four days later. They hurriedly installed the optics and spent time on the range one evening sighting them in or adjusting them as required.

A few nights later the alarm horns went off. Ray rushed to the shelter and the road sensor was tripped to the east of the property. Scott and the others grabbed their weapons and slipped outside to meet the attack. But no attack came and they could see nothing in their night vision binoculars. Perhaps, they decided, it had been an animal. Everyone was awake again and Stacy made more coffee. They analyzed the event and decided that, like it or not, they were going to have to make more changes.

The final decision was to build what amounted to a guard tower to be manned nightly 7 days a week. They would make up a duplicate panel and add a switch so that the alarm horns could be activated automatically in one position and manually by the guard in the other position. Only Jennifer was exempt from guard duty. Stacy set up a rotation for the nine of them and they would pull guard duty for 4 hours every third night.

A week passed and then two. It wasn't until one night during the third week that one of the sensors tripped. A quick check by the guard through the night vision binoculars revealed a deer and the alarms were not activated. It wasn't the same situation 2 nights later when a road alarm light lit up. The same quick scan revealed four vehicles, moving along the road slowly.

Rosemary hit the alarm and in moments everyone was armed and out of their homes, ready for action. The vehicles stopped at the driveway but no one got out. After a while the vehicles moved on. The two incidents had proved to be a good test of the system. They only had to get up if the guard saw potential intruders. However, Rosemary said

that she wanted to discuss something, so Stacy put on the coffee and they put the system on automatic and gathered to hear out Rosemary.

Rosemary admitted that she had gotten quite sleepy and if the light had gone off ten minutes later, she might have missed it entirely. They finally decided that they should rewire the system. The manual alarm would be wired parallel to the automatic system and the automatic system could be set to trip immediately or after a brief delay.

While there was a guard on duty, he or she would have the system switched to delay position and could reset the delay system if there was nothing to be concerned over. Otherwise, the delay circuit would automatically trigger the alarms after the delay period. They all knew that it was just a matter of time before a real attack came. Jackson had been hit twice more since they had been attacked and had repulsed both attacks.

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The Sheriff came out for a visit. He told them about the two additional attacks on the community and they showed him their preparations. To say that the Sheriff was pleasantly surprised would be an understatement. He talked to Ray about purchasing a 1-acre lot for a home and they reached a deal.

The Sheriff and his wife would be building in spring. That would give him time to find a doublewide they liked and sell their home. He wanted to know if they were adequately armed to repel intruders and they assured him that they were more than prepared, reserving the details until he was retired and living there.

It was quiet, too quiet, if one were to ask Ray. He was getting that awful feeling in his gut. November came and Colin Powell was elected President. The Republicans regained control in Congress and held 63 Senate seats and 61% of the House. The US was in for a big change on January 20th. Powell had watched as Kerry had mismanaged the military to the point that they were nearly ineffective. It was another one of those LBJ/Vietnam situations.

Jennifer presented Ryan with a healthy 8 pound 3 ounce boy on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2013, Raymond Ryan. She was a little early, thank God! They hadn't experienced any more problems at the acreage either. But Ray was now taking Pepcid AC for the ache in his gut.

Powell's cabinet appointees were, to a person, military veterans. The appointments sailed through the Senate in record time. Meanwhile, Powell met with the Joint Chiefs and they developed a plan to clean up the country. Powell gave them a set of goals and told them to work it out on their own; he wasn't going to interfere on a day-to-day basis. They would meet periodically as the situation required.

He asked Congress to increase the Army to 15 Divisions, increase the military pay and benefits and appropriate enough money to get all 10 of the Nimitz class carriers activat-

ed. Everyone had his or her marching orders and Congress quickly gave the new President everything he asked for. It would take time to build up the military, but the remaining military would be a lot more effective. To help with the military buildup, Congress passed significant reenlistment bonuses and extended them to anyone who had left the military during the past 3 years.

The military went from 7 understaffed Divisions to 8 fully staffed Divisions practically overnight. Returnees only had to go through an abbreviated 3-week program before they were assigned to units. Most of the 3 weeks were spent getting them back into fighting condition and refreshing their arms skills. It is amazing what military spending will do for an economy.

There were barracks to be reconditioned, stores in the form of food, ammunition and heavier munitions to be acquired. There were vast fleets of vehicles to be serviced and returned to use. And, the Army's ranks soon swelled to 10 and then 11 Divisions. The Navy was soon up to full strength and the carriers were hastily refurbished and returned to service. Submarines began to make the patrols just like before 2004.

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Winter turned to spring and as the military geared up and became effective, the gangsters, the convicts and the lawless among American society had to find a place to hide. Some out of the way place like, say, Jackson Hole and a hundred other out-of-the-way locations.

The residents filled sandbags and created fighting positions. It was going to be a long summer. The first to arrive were the escapees from Riverton. It was daytime and the automatic alarm system tripped, sending the residents scurrying. It was a small group, maybe numbering 25-30. They were dirty, disorganized, but heavily armed with an assortment of firearms. They walked right in like they owned the place, noting only 5 houses.

The homemade Claymores took out over half of their number practically instantly. Well, the damned things did work after all. The remaining attackers went to ground and began shooting in the general direction of the homes. These were desperate men, fleeing from an encounter with the Police and Sheriff's Deputies in Jackson. They had started out numbering 75 or so when they hit the town. Twenty-five or so had arrived at the acreage and now they were down to 11.

Scott, Ray, Ryan, Stacy and Susan sought out targets; these guys were really hunkered down, and began to eliminate the remaining 11 men, one-by-one. Finally when there were but three of the cons remaining, the men made a break for the vehicles. They went down in a hail of gunfire. None of the residents had so much as a hair out of place.

The women went to the house and left the cleanup to the men. None of the weapons the cons had were worth keeping, so they loaded the bodies and weapons into the ve-

hicles and headed to town. The Sheriff's Department was becoming pretty efficient at disposing of bodies. But, before they left, they replaced the expended Claymores. Ron had been busy during the winter, and they had several replacements on hand. Ryan followed in Ray's pickup to bring the men back to the acreage.

## Mountain Man – Chapter 20 – The Long Hot Summer

It doesn't get all that hot in Jackson Hole, at least not out at the acreage. But, this summer would be hot. Hot from the volumes of lead that ended up flying. The minute they could begin, the contractor's crew put in the Sheriff's basement. It too was connected to the tunnel system. The Sheriff's home was located at the other end of the row of cabins, away from the road.

Sheriff Rob Zimmerman had been Sheriff a long time. When he went into the forced retirement, he was made an active reserve deputy so that he could retain some of his law enforcement privileges. When the fellas got around to showing all of their secrets to Bob and his wife, they each were in for some surprises.

Rob had all sorts of LEO-only weapons and equipment, including several automatic weapons. But, he didn't have any hand grenades or M203 grenade launchers. It was a good thing he hadn't known about this stuff when he was Sheriff, he told them.

The attacks seemed to come about every two weeks, give or take. Usually, the attackers were the tattered remnants of a group that had attacked Jackson and fled to the north and west. However not every group risked starting a fight in Jackson, the word was getting out.

In late June, one of the groups that had bypassed Jackson attacked the acreage during the night. The alarm system worked as it was supposed to and Rob turned up with an MP5. This bunch was very careful and they probed the defenses tentatively at first, sending a single man forward.

They let the scout penetrate their perimeter, hoping that it would lead the intruders to abandon caution. Thanks to Rob's good graces, they had picked up several suppressors, one for each sniper rifle. When the single man got too close, Stacy took him out with the suppressed M-21.

The residents could see the intruders belly crawling forward and when the intruders came in range of three of the Claymores, they let loose with the explosive devices. The remaining intruders moved to follow the same path that their dead comrades had taken, assuming, correctly, that the Claymores were a onetime use device and that they now had a clear path.

With their first line of defense now useless, the folks opened up on the belly crawling intruders. It seemed to take a lot of rounds of ammo for each intruder that went down. The residents were all good shots, except for Rob's wife and she stayed inside to watch baby Ray.

Still, the intruders were very good and a couple of them had escaped notice and were performing a flanking maneuver. They would have gotten away with it too, but one of them made a noise and Rob let loose in that general direction with the MP5. Now aware

that they were being flanked, the resident's shifted their defensive posture to cover an attack from any direction.

Sweeping the area, Jennifer's red dot landed on a target where there shouldn't be a target and she let loose with a short burst. The other flanker went down, dead before he hit the ground. The intruders could see that they weren't getting anywhere and withdrew. They got into their vehicles and sped off into the night in a hail of gunfire. This was going to be an interesting after-action session. They set the alarm system to automatic and Stacy went to brew another of the huge pots of coffee.

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"We about got creamed," Scott exclaimed. "We had no redundancy for the Claymores."

"How many more of the mines do we have Ron?" Ray asked.

"I have about a 50% backup for the mines we have," Ron said. "We still have plenty of detonators and nuts and bolts, but I ran out of explosives."

"What kind of explosives did you use?" Rob asked.

"Rob, I started out with C-4, but when that ran out I used whatever I could get," Ron said. "Mainly dynamite removed from the sticks and packed on the pipe sections."

"Maybe I can be of some help," Rob offered. "What would you prefer, C-4 or dynamite?"

"C-4 if I could get it," Ron said. "But I don't have a source."

"I was Sheriff around here for a long time and a whole lot of people owe me favors," Rob said. "Let me see what I can do for you."

"Ok," Ron said, "But the wire is going to be a problem, too."

"I learned something in Sapper school that might be of value," Ryan said. "If we could come up with some stepping relays and some batteries, we wouldn't need much more wire."

Ryan got a piece of paper and drew a diagram.

"You use the wires to advance the stepping relay," he explained. "If they're wired the way I've shown, each time you send current to the relay, it advances one step and sets off the next Claymore. You can have as many mines on one relay as it has contacts minus 1; usually up to 11. The batteries fire the detonators."

"Where would we get something like those relays?" Ray asked.

“At the phone company,” Ryan said. “They’re old technology now, but I’ll bet they have a box of the old telephone stepping relays lying around.”

The phone company did indeed have a box of the old relays lying around and they were more than happy to give them to Rob. Rob used up about half the favors he’d built up over the years, but he did manage to get Ron a large supply of C-4. It probably wasn’t enough, so he also got several cases of dynamite, a few spools of detonator wire and 4 gross of the electrical detonators.

Ray and Scott rounded up a lot of 12” pipe, which they later cut into sections. They also cleaned out the junkyard’s supply of nuts and bolts and ball bearings. The only batteries they could come up with were 12-volt auto batteries. Each battery had a lot of amperage and they only needed 2 per section.

Ryan assembled the stepping relays and replaced each panel switch with a three position momentary contact switch; up to advance the relay and down to reset it with a center neutral. These particular relays could handle up to 9 mines per relay. Although they had 10 contacts, the first had to be unused. However, they simply did not have enough supplies to put 9 layers of mines around the entire property perimeter. So, they put 9 layers on the southern exposure next to the road and 3 layers on the other exposures. If 9 layers of mines wouldn’t stop a group of attackers, they figured, they were up against so many people they would be overwhelmed.

Ron had 9 spare mines for each position on the southern exposure. To test the setup, Ryan connected light bulbs to all 10 of the stepping relay contacts. The first light was on, that was as it should be. As Ray pressed up on the momentary contact switch, the lights lit, in turn, with the previous light extinguishing. When Ray pressed the down, the solenoid returned the wiper to the first position. They were good to go.

Everyone was pretty impressed with Rob’s MP5 and he gave each of the snipers one to use as a backup arm. There came a point that a sniper’s rifle no longer made sense, especially on such a small acreage as theirs.

They took time out to practice with the weapons; they were no good to them if they were unfamiliar with them. Practice was just another form of preparation. Ray would have preferred a heavier cartridge, but Rob only had the 9mm’s. The MP5/10’s were special weapons made for the feds and the SEALs and Rob didn’t have access to them. Of course, there was always his Colt S&W and the shotgun, so Ray could live with it.

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They were attacked twice in July as the Army continued to rout the bad guys. Ray heard on his ICOM radio that Jackson wasn’t the only area to be hit. The Aspen, Colorado area seemed to have quite a group of residents and they had had to defend themselves more than once.

So had a bunch of the Johnny Rebs down in Georgia. Those good ole boys made short shift of the cons. Up in the woods in the northeast, another group of survivors had taken out more than their share of the bad guys. August saw only a single attack, but it was a larger force and they got down to the eighth layer of Claymores before the bad guys gave up.

Ray was beginning to wonder if someone had put up a sign directing the bad guys to the acreage. They were getting low on mines too and had to make a trip into Jackson to get more 12" pipe. It was a real bitch cutting down that pipe so Ray bought a used metal band saw from the plumbing shop.

While Scott cut the pipe to length, Ray cut the lengths into quarters. Ron added the layer of dynamite, the nuts and bolts and covering as soon as the pipes were cooled off. Ryan installed the mines and Rob ate donuts and drank coffee with Michael. Everything was as it should be.

September witnessed two small attacks but they were small groups of men in poor condition and poorly armed. And then, as quickly as it all began, it ended. The Army was at 13 Divisions and growing. The crisis was over.

The President immediately got the electrical and water utility companies back on the job and they finally finished the upgrades to the water system. The electrical system retrofitting should be done by the end of summer the following year.

Congress trimmed some of the programs implemented by their Democrat predecessors and repealed the Assault Weapons Ban. The experience of the summer of 2013 clearly demonstrated the need for an armed populous.

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The Russians had heard nothing from the Chinese, but their intelligence apparatus reported on the American buildup. Their spy satellites also showed that the Nimitz class carriers were all operational and no longer stuck in port. It was hard to distinguish the new Ford class from the Nimitz class; the primary difference was the island.

They had no idea what had happened to the American submarines, but the number of empty berths seemed to be steadily increasing. That alarmed the Russians and they moved their boomers to provide coverage of the US. Russia had taken over the Middle East and had oil flowing. Their largest customer was Europe and the US only bought sparingly.

Satellite intelligence also showed that the Americans were making progress on opening new Alaskan oil fields, something that stalled under former President Kerry. This Powell was a thoughtful man, they noticed. He had been the Chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff during the first Gulf War. He had retired and declined to run for Presi-



dent, but who could believe that story that he didn't run because his wife didn't want him to? Then, he had served as Secretary of State under Bush Junior.

He had suddenly retired as Secretary of State during 2004 and had remained in retirement until he came out fighting in 2011 seeking the presidency. This Powell was someone to be reckoned with.

President Powell was getting a briefing from the Joint Chiefs. The Russian submarines had repositioned themselves away from the China coast he was informed and appeared to be headed for positions to cover the US. It was getting harder and harder to track the Russian boomers as they slowly upgraded their equipment.

The Typhoons were retired except for one and they had a new class, the Borei I and Borei II. The former held 16 Bulava missiles and the latter 20. The US Los Angeles Class boats were old and nearing the end of their useful lives, the Admiral warned.

The US needed to go into full production of the Virginia class submarines. The US had better find a way to build at least a dozen new submarines a year until all of the LA class subs were replaced, he was told. Whoa! The Virginia class subs cost \$1.65 billion each based on FY95 dollars and a 30-ship class. That would probably make them around \$3 Billion each in FY14 dollars.

That was going to be tough to get through Congress even with the Republican majority in both chambers. But, he'd try for a 48-ship addition to the class that now only contained 10 submarines the Virginia, Texas, Hawaii, North Carolina, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Missouri, California, Mississippi and the Minnesota . They had only been able to deliver one of those per year, beginning in 2004. How on earth was he going to be able to deliver 12 per year for 4 years?

The Congress was feeling generous and authorized a \$144 Billion building program for the new block III Virginia class submarines. It made sense; the Virginia class was intended to replace the earlier Los Angeles class boats anyway.

The modular construction of the class made it easier to incorporate new technology and the Virginia class boats were 30% cheaper over their lifetime than the Seawolf class boats. They were very stealthy, too. But could Electric Boat Corporation and Newport News Shipbuilding build 12 a year? To add to the situation was that Congress handled the entire matter in closed sessions.

Ultimately General Dynamics contracted with submarine yards in Newport News, VA, Groton, CT, Bangor, WA, Kings Bay, GA, Newport, R.I. and Quonset Point RI to build the boats on a 24-hour schedule. It wasn't until the first submarines put to sea 7 months later that the Russians became aware of the increased building program.

They put their intelligence network into high gear only to find 6 more submarines being launched 6 months later. This caused great concern in the Kremlin and when 6 more

submarines were launched 6 months later, they all but went into a panic. That was 18 new Virginia class subs in 18 months, for a total of 28.

They began their own military buildup, but these things took time, especially in Russia. Before they could build and launch three new submarines, the Americans had launched a dozen more. The Americans even began to become more efficient and the next 6 made it out a week earlier.

I'm getting ahead of the story here, but the US managed to build and launch 48 new Virginia class attack submarines in 45 months. It was the most prolific ship/boat building event since the construction of the Liberty ships in WW II. The modular construction of the Virginia class submarines lent itself to a wide array of subcontracting options. Six months into his second term, a grey haired Colin Powell had his 48 new Virginia class submarines and 6 more under construction, bringing the final total to 54.

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Under Colin Powell's leadership, the US slowly became a nice place to live again. The Army got its 15 Divisions, there was some secret submarine building program going on and two more Ford class carriers were slated to begin construction. It was like the Reagan years in more way than one. At least Powell didn't fall asleep at cabinet meetings or eat jellybeans, but he was beginning to show his age.

At the acreage, things became very peaceful. Ray sold more lots to retiring Police Officers, Deputy Sheriffs and retired military, especially Marines and Army people. Ryan took over for Ray running the daily operations of the acreage. Ryan bought 320 adjoining acres and they moved the barn and farming operation to the new ranch. That left them room for further growth in the housing development.

Ryan added a 60,000-gallon used propane storage tank from a depot. He added 3 more of the 60,000-gallon water tanks. He built a small service station for the residents and put in underground gasoline and additional diesel tanks. He named the development Benton Village.

Living out in the country, eating right and getting plenty of exercise agreed with the residents of the quasi-community and people weren't slowing down as fast as others did in the big cities. Ryan and Jennifer had two more children over the four-year period that followed the end of the 'period of unrest' as some had come to call it.

They removed all of the homemade Claymore mines and stored them, just in case. Ryan managed to hook up with a classmate from West Point who was a Major on a fast track. One thing led to another and, perhaps because the old friend felt sorry for Ryan or for whatever reason, Ryan managed to acquire a sizable quantity of the genuine article, M18A1 Claymore mines.

His gold had increased significantly in value and Ryan converted some of it back to cash and used the money to improve things on his 320 acres. They had a thriving herd of dairy cattle, a small cheese making operation, a mid-sized herd of Black Angus beef and a huge stable of Arabian horses. They now butchered right there on the ranch. They opened a small grocery store off the service station and were buying food from grocery wholesalers. They had a large grocery warehouse with many months of food on hand.

Because of the warehouse, the service station/grocery store and the huge tanks, 15 acres of the development was unavailable for housing. At the end of the four-year quiet period, all of the lots were filled. Because of Ray's interest in preparedness, Ryan built a community shelter in the general area of the industrial buildings.

They could have built more houses but Ray said all of the lots had to be one acre, minimum. All of the houses had basements and were connected to the community shelter by a tunnel system. A short tunnel with a locked door connected the original six homes to the new tunnel system.

Ryan also built a 6' high block wall around the 40 acres and added a car gate. One would have thought that with their wealth and new ranch, Ryan and Jennifer would have built a ranch house. They stayed in their doublewide mobile home.

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All of the residents were gun owners and the most popular sport was shooting at the new 1,000-yard range Ryan built on his property near where it adjoined Ray's. Even the Sheriff's wife Bonnie learned to shoot and to enjoy it. It seemed that every other weekend there was some sort of shooting event. People who like golf and other sports had to go all the way to Jackson to play a round. Ryan's greatest concession to the golfers was to build a putting green.

Some women look old when they get old; others seem to get better looking. That was the case with Jennifer and most certainly the case with Stacy. Mostly men just look old when they get old, as in Ray and Scott's case. They were still in pretty fair condition and worked out every morning all year long now. Stacy joined Ray and Susan, Scott. The four of them were in pretty good shape for a bunch of early seniors.

Before she'd had the two girls, Jennifer took time out to take and pass the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants certification exam. This allowed her to practice medicine under the supervision of a Physician. However, the doctor only got to the acreage when Jennifer ran out of prescription forms and he needed to sign another pad.

Most of the drugs were purchased in bulk now and rarely did Jennifer need to write a prescription. Ryan had built her a small clinic near the grocery store. She didn't keep office hours, but was available to the residents 24/7. Jennifer consulted with the physi-

cian on the more serious issues, but it finally got to the point that he told her not to bother him unless it were really serious.

Michael Jr. and Crystal and Bill and his wife Melanie, sold off Michael's ranch and moved the stock to Ryan's half section. They took care of the ranching part for Ryan, allowing him to devote his time to the operations at the development. Except for Mike and Bill, everyone was basically retired, even Ryan. And to tell the truth, Mike and Bill had some ranch hands and they didn't work all that hard either, they just managed the ranch. Life was good and getting better. Colin Powell had just been reelected to his second term.

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The UN was still in New York and Russia began to accuse the US of Imperialism. So, what's new about that? Come to think of it, that's sort of funny because Russia had become the world's policeman.

True, the US had a 15 Division standing Army and 13 carriers and finally admitted to having built 54 additional Virginia class fast attack submarines. And it was also true that the US had only retired the original Los Angeles class submarines, but so what the US ambassador to the UN insisted, the US wasn't at war with anyone they were just being prepared.

The Ambassador asked the Russian Ambassador how Russia had managed to launch 172% of its treaty limited strategic missiles without resorting to their fleet ballistic missile submarines. And then, the US ambassador to the UN did a strange thing. He quoted Adlai E. Stevenson to the Russian Ambassador. Does anyone remember that moment in history?

As it turned out, Stevenson produced the performance of his life. He hectored the Soviet envoy, Valerian Zorin, demanding: *Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the USSR has placed and is placing medium- and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no - don't wait for the translation - yes or no?*

Zorin replied that he was not in an American courtroom, to which Stevenson retorted that he *was in the courtroom of world opinion right now*. The Russian, cornered, said he would consult Moscow and respond *in due course*, to which Stevenson famously replied: *I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over*.

Journalists often referred to the exchange as an Adlai Stevenson moment.

*Do you, Ambassador Gatilov, deny that the USSR fired 172% of its authorized treaty strategic ballistic missiles against the Middle East 5 years ago? Yes or no - don't wait for the translation - yes or no?*

Gatilov was cornered just had been Zorin, and he too said he would consult Moscow and respond *in due course*. The American Ambassador played it to the hilt. He told Gatilov, *I am prepared to wait for my answer until hell freezes over.*

The Soviet Union pulled its missiles from Cuba. Russia moved its submarines closer to the US; it was their turn for a blockade; a submarine blockade to be exact. Bad move, Ivan. Powell might be Mr. Clean, but he was neither senile or a fool. He wanted Russia to start something. He calculated that the Russian boomers were just a bluff.

The US needed that oil from the Middle East at a reasonable price. Although the US had decommissioned most active submarines of the original LA class, they still had the 10 of the original class, 8 hulls of the upgraded class starting with 719 and 23 of the 688I class hulls.

They also had 3 Seawolf class submarines and 54 Virginia class submarines plus the 14 Ohio class SSBN and 4 Ohio class SSGN missile submarines. Unless my math is off, that would be 108 attack submarines and 18 boomers of one type or another. And unless my memory is poor, 55 of those attack submarines are stealthy, right? The third Seawolf class sub, the Jimmy Carter, was a little like its name sake, a little different from the rest. Better say 107 attack and 1 I don't know.

However unlike Mr. G.H.W. Bush and his kid, G.W. Bush, Powell didn't want to be seen as having started a war; tough on the old image and all that. Let the Russians try and blockade the US, was what his advisors were telling him would happen; we'll just sink those subs of theirs.

Of course, Powell wouldn't know if the gamble would pay off and wouldn't know for certain until we saw missiles incoming. But, he was staking his life, and the lives of a lot of other people, that such a thing would never happen. The Russians once had the largest submarine fleet in the world. But, by 2010, the fleet had been projected to fall to 53 submarines. That didn't consider the submarine building program that Russia initiated in 2001. So, how many submarines did Russia really have?

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Ray caught the telecast of the US Ambassadors speech on CNN. It immediately reminded him of Adlai Stevenson's speech at the UN when he was still in High School. Ray had that sinking feeling again. This was a 2 Pepsid moment if there ever was one. "Why is it?" he wondered, "That just when everything is so peaceful, we seem to be pushing for a war?"

All of a sudden Ray began to worry about that grey-headed man in the White House. The US's UN Ambassador would never have dared make that speech without Powell's approval, and Ray was not talking about tacit approval, but express approval. It sounded to him like it was time to Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition, again.

The fence caused the problem that the acreage now had with security. The tower couldn't see over the fence and raising the tower was pretty risky. The net was back up and running smoothly once more so Ray went hunting for subminiature security cameras. He found just what he was looking for and they were cheap. The wireless models only had a range of 100-yards at best, so he figured they would have to go with wired cameras and a lot of cable.

But for the cost of all of that cable, he could buy bigger radios and save money. He spent most of one night on the website figuring out which cameras and which radios to buy. It started to get more and more complicated the longer he worked on a solution. He ended up going with the wired system and ordered only the cameras. The simple solution was to have a security company come in and set up a bank of monitors and use his cameras. The online firm gave a discount for large orders so he placed a large order.

Ray must be getting old. The security company sold the same exact camera and if you bought it from them, installation was free. But a few thousand dollars later he had a security panel with 16 monitors on it and a gang switch that allowed him to switch from wall to wall. Each wall contained 16 cameras and he could watch a whole wall at one time. Ray shouldn't have felt badly, the cameras he bought off the net were one generation newer and worked very, very well in low light. But, it took Ryan to point that out to him. He hadn't lost his touch after all, but he could no longer tell. Yep, Ray was getting old.

They reinstalled the Claymores on the outside of the fence. They used all they had of the real thing on the southern approach and filled out the layers with the homemade devices. They were 9 layers deep on the south and 6 layers deep on the other three sides, thanks to the real Claymores. They did have to replace the batteries, years of disuse had rendered them inoperable and they wouldn't hold a charge.

They were ready to go way before TSHTF. It didn't seem to Ray that the rest of the US was alarmed. They would have been had they known that the US submarine commanders had orders to sink all Russian submarines, regardless of where they were and that the US was at DEFCON 3.

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This gambit of Powell's was a calculated risk, but it wasn't as foolish as the casual observer might think. The President calculated, and the Joint Chiefs agreed, that the US could probably take out all of the Russian subs before anyone became any the wiser. The Russians had expended a lot of missiles on the Middle East. Powell was gambling that most of their remaining missile force was on those boomers.

Maybe not all, but enough so that if the boomers disappeared, Russia wouldn't dare attack the US with missiles. He was in fact right, Russia wouldn't dare attack the US with missiles, but that didn't mean that Russia couldn't attack the US. The group of Virginia class boats would seek out and destroy the Russian boomers. The remaining Virginia

class subs and the Seawolf class boats would seek out and destroy the Russian attack submarines. The 688I class boats would protect the coast.

In addition, all 13 carriers would stand off the coast at 200 miles to provide what he hoped would be an air umbrella. All US Air Force fighters would be moved to bases nearest the coasts and the Army and Corps would be dispersed around the US to repel any Russian invasion.

Yes sir, he told the Joint Chiefs, he loved it when a plan came together. There was one hole in his logic, but no one could see it. They should have asked Ray, he would have seen it. The plan was in motion and had Ray been a betting man who knew of the plan, he might just have bet on the Russians.

The Borei class submarines, were difficult to locate, but the Virginia class submarines were ghosts in the water. It took time, but they located the Borei and sank every one of them. The stealthy US attack boats eventually eliminated all of the Russian nuclear and diesel electric boats too. While the diesel electric boats were far quieter, they had to have air and eventually gave their positions away to SOSUS. Phase one was complete, now the Americans sat back to see how the Russians would react.

When the first Russian boomer was listed as missing the Russians figured the Americans were responsible. When the second went missing, they were certain. They began to mobilize their Army. Most Americans probably think of the Russian Army in very negative terms relative to their fighting ability and perhaps that results from Afghanistan.

But Americans had their own Afghanistan called Vietnam the first time and the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars the second time. No one gave much thought to the Russian surface Navy, perhaps because a large carrier fleet didn't dominate it. But, a lot of those ships had been made cruise missile capable in the intervening years. And the Russians had nuclear tipped cruise missiles, contrary to popular opinion. Powell should have known that they did, but he was uncertain.

A cruise missile is a marvel of engineering. It flies at subsonic or supersonic speeds right above the land or the water. It is difficult to detect and when detected, difficult to shoot down. The Mk 15 Phalanx Close-In Weapons System (CIWS - pronounced "sea-whiz") is a fast reaction, rapid-fire 20-millimeter gun system that provides US Navy ships with a terminal defense against anti-ship missiles that have penetrated other fleet defenses.

Designed to engage anti-ship cruise missiles and fixed-wing aircraft at short range, Phalanx automatically engages functions usually performed by separate, independent systems such as search, detection, threat evaluation, acquisition, track, firing, target destruction, kill assessment and cease fire. Phalanx underwent operational tests and evaluation onboard USS Bigelow in 1977, and exceeded maintenance and reliability specifications.

Phalanx production started in 1978 with orders for 23 USN and 14 Foreign Military Sales (FMS) systems. CIWS has been a mainstay self-defense system aboard nearly every class of ship since the late 70's. It was originally designed to defeat low altitude anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs). As anti-ship cruise missiles became more complex in maneuvers and ability to be detected, and warfare areas moved from open ocean to littoral environments, CIWS has evolved to meet the threat.

The Russians weren't going to attack the US with cruise missiles, they were going to attack the US fleet with nuclear tipped cruise missiles. A nuclear tipped missile doesn't have to get within range of CIWS to do its dirty deed. This is a case where close counts. Perhaps that's why the US developed the RIM-116 RAM. While the CIWS has a range of 3,600 meters, the RAM has a range of 5,600 meters. A second version called the SeaRAM was first installed in 2008, 6 years earlier.



## Mountain Man – Chapter 21 – This Is Getting Old

The Russians had built and flown the world's largest cargo aircraft back in 1982. The aircraft, the AN-124 Condor, was a great source of pride for the Russians. Empty, the original plane had a range of 11,000km and loaded 5,000km. In the more than 30 years since the Russians had built the huge plane, which was larger than a C-5A Galaxy, tremendous strides had been made in jet engine design and performance, especially in the US.

The Russians had purchased used 757, 767 and 777 aircraft and had used the engines as models to upgrade the engines on the AN-124. With the upgraded engines, the planes could fly nearly 8,500km fully loaded. They had been building vast numbers of the AN-124 for years and the oil money from sales of the Middle Eastern oil had allowed them to build even more for a fleet of 1,250. The related AN-225 Cossack, currently the world's largest cargo plane, would be used to transport matériel and used Rolls-Royce engines.

The Russian plan had to be modified when the US had taken out their submarine fleet. They had intended to launch conventional cruise missiles against mainland US targets. Oh yes, with the influx of the oil money, Russia had been planning on invading the US for some time. But, they were way behind their original timetable, way behind. From a historical point of view, one might wonder if it weren't that delay that was responsible for... But wait, I can't tell you how it ended until I tell how it began and what happened.

The Russians had 1,250 of the lumbering giant AN-124 aircraft. All of their surface ships were equipped with conventional and nuclear tipped cruise missiles. They had planned on attacking the US with a barrage of conventional cruise missiles and in the confusion that ensued, fly the 1,250, cargo aircraft over the pole and land forces across the northern tiers of states with the AN-225s supplying matériel.

They figured that they could airlift a significant force in the first wave, refuel the aircraft from American fuel stores, return to Russia and haul in a second wave. 250 of the AN-124's had been converted to tankers and they could also fly their entire fleet of MiG-33's and resurrected MiG-35's as a CAP for their invasion fleet.

When the US began moving its forces to repel an invasion along its coast, the Russian plan fell into place. The modification they had to make to their plans had been to use the surface ships to first attack the American carrier task group and then move closer and launch the conventional cruise missiles against the US, not from their submarines, but from their surface fleet.

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Still gloating over the success of the attacks that took out the Russian submarine fleet, Powell and the Joint Chiefs were alarmed with the news that the entire Russian surface fleet seemed to be sailing towards the US. The absence of troop transports among the

Russian fleets was even more confusing. Why would the Russian Navy be sailing in harm's way if not to invade? And if it were an invasion, where were the troop transports? They were still puzzling over that one when the Russian surface fleet launched its nuclear tipped cruise missiles.

An AEGIS cruiser is a marvelous ship. It can defend a task group against all manners of attack: from the air, from the surface and from beneath the surface. The Ticonderoga class cruisers were something else. So were the Burke-class guided missile AEGIS destroyers. Why, the task groups were almost bulletproof. They could even shoot down the surface skimming anti-ship cruise missiles.

The Russian military philosophy had always been to overcome any tactical disadvantages by the sheer weight in numbers. It had worked against the Germans in WW II and was an ingrained part of their military approach. In a carefully timed operation, the surface fleet would attack the American fleet and move closer to the coasts before launching the conventional cruise missiles. The departure of the first wave of aircraft was timed so that their arrival over the US would coincide with the second cruise missile attack.

So it began. The Russians launched the first wave of nuclear cruise missiles and steamed on. American attack submarines began to sink the Russian ships, but there were so many. The AEGIS ships picked up the incoming sea skimming anti-ship missiles but there were simply too many and a few got through.

None of the carriers were sunk, but a goodly number of their protective umbrella of support vessels was seriously damaged or lying on the bottom. As it were, none of the carriers could launch strike aircraft until repairs were made. The Russians continued to steam towards the American fleet and just under 400 miles off the east and west coasts, launched the conventional cruise missiles.

All of the top government officials had been moved to safety at Mt. Weather and other secure places. Powell was heard to utter, "What a revolting development this is!" The news media was informed of the apparent invasion and Americans were instructed to take cover. Geraldo, given his flair for the dramatic, had said, "The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming." Idiot. Out in Wyoming, Ray and several of the others had been watching the drama unfold on TV. Ray was heard to utter his own famous remark, "Uh-oh!"

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A little quick math will disclose the scope of the problem facing the US. 1,250 aircraft minus 250 tankers left 1,000 aircraft to carry troops and equipment; the AN-225 carried equipment and supplies, leaving 1,000 carrying troops. The Russians had built two extra decks into the troop carriers and had packed the troops in like sardines, caring little for their comfort.

There were 300 soldiers per deck plus the officers in the forward passenger carrying area modeled after the C-5A. Round numbers, 1,000 soldiers per aircraft, or 1 million soldiers. It was all so improbable, yet it was happening. The American Air Force fighters were out of position too, and unable to repel an invasion from over the polar icecap. Not that it would have mattered; the Russians had seen the movement of the aircraft to the bases along the coasts and over half of the cruise missiles targeted the bases.

It was a most revolting development indeed. Not all of the Russian aircraft made it to the US, but the losses were insignificant given the size of the attacking force. Perhaps the Russians would have won the day right then and there had not the Joint Chiefs dispersed the 15 Divisions of Army and plus the Marines around the country.

But they had and the Russians soon found themselves engaged in horrific combat. The Russian air fleet was refueled and returned to Russia for the second wave. What was it like in the US in 2017 after the Russian invasion? It sort of reminds me of that old movie, "Red Dawn", except there were no Cubans. And just where in God's name did the Russians get so many troops?

An opportunistic American media was carrying a blow-by-blow telecast of the fighting. At the acreage, the residents viewed the fighting with a growing concern. This continued for several days until after the second Russian wave had arrived and then nothing. No phone, no TV, no power, no nothing. They had gone from an information overload to an information vacuum.

Ray was 70 years old and getting pretty long in the tooth for such an adventure. Most of the residents were old, the youngest among them, excluding the children, were Ryan, Jennifer, Mike, Crystal, Bill and Melanie. They had plenty of fuel and food. The electrical thin film roofs powered all the homes and the water heated by solar panels and backed up by propane fueled hot water heaters. Every home had steam heat and a backup generator. The community shelter had a large backup generator, too.

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The information vacuum was maddening. They could see the occasional dogfight as American and Russian fighters clashed with each other in the skies, but essentially there was little outside news. What news they had, came from that old Ham radio receiver Ray had down in his shelter. On some days the news was good, American tanks had wiped out a group of Russian tanks or American forces had overwhelmed the Russians in a pitched battle. On other days, the news was bad, and the Americans had lost this or that. Powell had underestimated the Russians, but had the Russians underestimated the American population?

Around the world, the reaction to Russia's invasion of the US was met with mixed emotions. Europe was a shadow of its former self, the virus had seen to that. Those countries that even cared couldn't mount an Army to assist either the Americans or the Rus-

sians, depending upon which country they favored. Many thought that the US was reaping its just desserts for a century of imperialism.

Others thought that if the US fell to the Russians, the world would change even more than it already had and that wasn't going to be a good thing. Africa had been pretty much spared the virus, but the AIDS pandemic, the constant tribal like infighting and other things had Africa in such a state that they had no interest in a war thousands of miles away.

The Chinese remained strangely silent. Were they just sitting back waiting to see who won the war between the Russians and Americans? Or, had the virus killed off more of their citizens than anyone suspected. Satellite intelligence revealed little to either the Russians or the Americans and they could only speculate. Radio communications were nearly nonexistent

However, with the onset of the war, all of the Russian and American satellites had been tasked and were hovering over North America, providing intelligence to the combatants. President Powell and the Joint Chiefs were doing their best to first contain the Russians and then drive them from the country. At the moment, the conflict was essentially at a stalemate. For every American success, there was a Russian success. And winter had come early in the fall of 2017 and the Russians were doing better in the conditions than were the Americans.

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"What are you doing sweetheart?" Stacy asked Ray who was sitting at his old computer in the shelter.

"Nothing much babe," Ray replied. "Just sitting here thinking more than anything else. I have to get you a present for your birthday, what will you be, 62? And, I have to think about an Anniversary present, too. It sure doesn't seem like 18 years."

"Nineteen years," Stacy corrected.

"Eighteen," Ray said. "We were married in 1999 and that's 18 years."

"We were married in 1998 and that's 19 years," Stacy laughed.

"Oh," Ray said. "Well 19 years, then, but it sure doesn't seem like 19 years."

"Time flies when you're having fun," Stacy nudged Ray.

"You trying to start something?" Ray asked.

"No dear," Stacy said. "I was just reminding you that the spark is still there."

“So, what do you want for your birthday and our anniversary?” Ray asked.

“Peace,” Stacy replied.

“Would that I could, Stacy,” Ray shook his head.

“Have you been listening to the radio?” Stacy asked.

“Pretty much the same old stuff, babe,” Ray answered. “Well, a bunch of those Johnny Rebs got tired of it and moved a couple of their militia units up north to do some guerrilla warfare on the Russians. They seem to be kicking rear and taking names.”

“If we weren’t all so old, I expect that we’d be doing the same thing,” Stacy surmised.

“Probably, babe,” Ray agreed. “But let’s face it, war is a young man’s game and it will be all we can do to defend this place if it comes to that.”

“What do you mean?” Stacy asked. “We repelled all of those assaults 4 years back without a single loss.”

“Yeah,” Ray said, “But those cons and gangsters didn’t have artillery and tanks.”

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Ryan was probably thinking along those same lines, because he was planning to change their defensive posture. If for some strange reason the Russians did get to the acreage, they were screwed. On the other hand, if he could keep them away from the acreage, they might have a chance.

Ryan, it seems, had been buying up dynamite for the past 4 years, explaining the purchases as being needed to clear trees from his land. The dealer had never been to the ranch and didn’t know that there wasn’t a single tree on the whole place. The man had sure bought a lot of dynamite, too, but the dealer had just chalked it up to an inexperienced blaster who used too much to accomplish the job. That dynamite was carefully stored in a bunker and attention was given to making sure it remained in good condition. Ryan had acquired a lot of other things, too.

Unbeknown to anyone beside Mike and Bill, Ryan had acquired through somewhat questionable channels some very questionable hardware. Things like the old Ma Deuces that the Army was scraping in favor of the newer M2E2s and things like the M120, 120mm mortar; and things like obsolete landmines that the Army had removed from their inventory when they finally went to the NSD-A mines.

The bunker was pretty good sized and it was plenty full. Ryan was well liked by a lot of the people he had served with back in his Army days and he wasn’t a bit shameful of having used all of those friendships to acquire the various weapons. It hadn’t been easy

and it hadn't been cheap, but a dead man couldn't spend money and there were Jennifer and the 3 kids to consider, not mentioning Mom and Dad and the others.

It was time to drag all of those munitions from the bunker and employ them before the Russians got there. But, he had to involve Ray and Scott and Ron. And when he did, the reactions weren't what he expected.

"Jeezus H.," Ray had exploded. "Where did you get all of that?"

"Around," Ryan answered. "Do you have a problem with it Ray?"

"Hell no Ryan," Ray said. "I'm just amazed that you have some of the things that you do."

"I had planned on getting more," Ryan said. "But I began to use up money too fast and then the Russians invaded. What do you think? Can we defend this place or not?"

Ron checked out all of the dynamite and explosives. "How did you get so much dynamite Ryan?" he asked.

"I told them I was buying it to clear stumps and trees," Ryan laughed. "I'll bet they thought that I was really wasting the dynamite."

"Hell, there is enough dynamite here to close both of the passes between here and Jackson," Ron replied.

"And anti-tank and anti-personnel mines if they do get through," Ray exclaimed. "Dang, Ryan, do you know how to use all of this stuff?"

"Not all of it no," Ryan admitted. "But I figured you would know how to use the stuff I didn't."

"I hope you have field manuals on that mortar," Ray said, "I have no idea how to aim one of those."

"I have field manuals on everything, but aren't you forgetting that you have field manuals on everything, too?" Ryan asked.

"That's right, I do, don't I," Ray laughed. "I'd completely forgotten about those manuals."

"I have some practice rounds for the mortar, too," Ryan said. "So you fellas better get to reading and practicing, I have a sinking feeling in my gut,"

"Take Pepcid," Ray said, "It helps a little."

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The men got the women to monitor the radio while they made preparations for what they deemed to be the inevitable. First they read the field manuals and then they took the armaments out and became familiar with them.

Inside of 10 days, they were proficient with the mortar and most everyone harkened to the Ma Deuces like they were long lost friends. Rob exploded in a flurry of profanity when he saw all of the weapons and that almost forced the others to sit on him to calm him down.

Ron placed the explosives to block the two passes. The blocked passes wouldn't stop a determined enemy, but why would the Russians come to the acreage? They didn't close the passes, but they were mined and ready to bring down. Further along they dug holes for the anti-tank mines, but held off placing them, lest they forget where one was and blow themselves up.

Close in they planted all of the antipersonnel mines; they couldn't do everything at the last minute, now could they? The passes would go down 60 seconds after the fuse igniter was pulled. Ron had finally gotten to use some of his fuse and the old igniters.

A man or woman was stationed at the first pass with a radio. His/her instructions were to fire up the bike or snowmobile depending on the season, ignite the fuse and radio in on the way to the second pass where he/she was to bring down the second pass.

When the word came, they would rush out and place the anti-tanks mines. Hopefully they would have sufficient time. They also hoped that Jackson would warn them well in advance and that they could bring down both small passes and get the mines in long before the enemy approached.

After the preparations were complete, they sat down to wait and tried to keep abreast on the developing war. There was all kind of chatter on the shortwave bands. Obviously the Russians had underestimated the armed American population.

After the troubled times during the Kerry administration, a whole lot of Americans severed their liberal roots and had taken up arms. It was like that poll that asked what the difference was between a liberal and a conservative and answered that the liberal hadn't been mugged, yet.

All of the terrorist attacks and the years of unrest that followed had seen millions of liberals become conservatives. And, they were armed and had food put up. America had become a nation of survivalists.

Moving to the acreage imposed a lot of requirements on the prospective residents, too. They were required to have a 7.62x51mm caliber MBR, an assault rifle, a shotgun with a 20" barrel, a .22 rifle and plus handguns for all of the adults. An adult was defined as anyone over the age of 15.

They also had to use the propane fueled steam heat, install the electrical thin film and solar water heater. Finally, they had to have a LP Vapor powered generator and keep a year's worth of food on hand for every member of the family. It was worse than joining the Mormon Church joining this community. Benton Village was a community that was totally prepared for any type of disaster, manmade or natural, short of Yellowstone blowing up or an asteroid striking the earth.

◦

What about those holes in the road for the anti-tanks mines? Covered with a piece of plywood and marked with a red flag. It wouldn't do to have the holes fill up with snow and ice, now would it? Ammunition for the M2 machine guns? They had more ammo than barrel life. Mortar rounds? Not a lot, but then they didn't have a lot of mortars either. What, no M72 LAW rockets or M136 AT-4s? No Mark 19 grenade launching machine guns? They were on Ryan's list, but time and money ran out before he could acquire everything on his list.

Although the M-21 and M-24, as service rifles, used the special M-118 ammo, Ray had never bothered using it. He hadn't had military scopes on his rifles before, either. Ray was sitting at his computer, lost in thought. He was thinking how he sometimes called Stacy Jennifer and vice versa.

Well, what did they expect? He was a tired old man with a failing memory, not Obi-wan Kenobi. Ray was so engrossed in thought that he hadn't heard Stacy approach. This was Stacy, his wife, right? Must be, she had red hair. Anyway, Stacy had spoken to him scaring him half out of his wits.

"What are you thinking about, honey?" Stacy asked.

"All sorts of useless things like how I can never keep you and Jennifer separated in my mind," Ray said.

"Well," Stacy said getting in the humor of the moment, "I'm the redhead and she's the brunette. She's the doctor and I'm the one you sleep with."

"I knew it was something like that Jennifer." Ray laughed, deliberately using the wrong name.

"I'd better not catch you in bed with Jennifer," Stacy roared, laughing so hard the tears were streaming down her face.

When they finally quit laughing, Ray told Stacy that the whole thing, the war, their preparations and the sinking feeling in his gut, were getting to him. He admitted that he was having trouble getting into a deep sleep anymore and he was having flashbacks to the times he had been wounded in Vietnam. This time was going to be different he said.



They weren't going to be up against a bunch of cons and gangsters. This time, they would be facing trained, disciplined soldiers.

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it," Stacy said. "Feel like going playing doctor and nurse?"

Ray smiled and took her hand.

◦

They continued to follow the war on the shortwave. The US seemed to be getting the upper hand, more or less. It was difficult to tell sometimes. The Air Force and the Naval fighters had finally gotten reassembled and were coordinating their efforts. Someone on the east coast said the fleet had put back into port, been repaired and had sailed. He hadn't heard whether the Pacific fleet had done the same.

Anyway, once America had been able to marshal its air assets, the tide of the war seemed to change if those radio reports were to be believed. One thing was obvious; the Russians had seriously underestimated the resistance that the American public was putting up. There were hundreds of accounts of how this group or that group had taken on a group of Russians and overwhelmed them.

This was the dangerous time. This was when the Russians would start to pull back, just like the bad guys had done. It was time to raise their level of alertness.

Although the entire community numbered less than 100, everyone 16 and up was a skilled marksman. Nearly every family had more than the minimum number of required weapons, too. They must have nearly 20 people who were so skilled with their weapons that they qualified as snipers. That might make all the difference. So many wars were fought using spray and pray tactics anymore that a skilled marksman was worth a dozen soldiers, maybe more.

Sure would have been nice to have some AT-4s though. Or, a half dozen M1A3 latest generation Abrams tanks. A lot of what would happen would depend upon whom they were up against. If it was a bunch of conscripts who were scared and running for their lives, that was one thing; if it were a crack Spetsnaz unit, that would be an entirely different story.

They didn't actually adjust anything. Everyone was already on pins and needles. The problem with an adrenalin rush like they were experiencing was that when the adrenalin wore off you were very, very tired. In order to get everyone to kick back a little, they decided to have an indoor picnic in the community shelter. That was the only community building large enough to house all the people for the get together. People really seemed to get into the idea too. It would be a potluck with the homeowners association providing the hamburgers and hot dogs.

Homeowners association? Yep, they had to have an organization to stand up against Ray and his survivalist mentality. The party turned out to be just the thing to break the tension. Now, everyone would be relaxed and ready if and when they needed to react to defend the acreage. They only went through a few cases of beer, so it wasn't a drunken brawl, either. Everyone lightened up and they were now just waiting without worrying. Didn't do any good to worry anyway, it just cost you your edge.

They sat there through the end of December and through the end of January and through the end of February. Then, just before the end of March 2018, the radio call came from the gal maintaining a lookout at the pass. A large group of unfamiliar vehicles was approaching and she'd triggered the explosives at the first pass and was on her way to the second pass.

They rushed to place the anti-tank mines and get ready for the pending attack. Kind of strange though that they hadn't heard a peep out of Jackson. What do you suppose could explain that? They set the mines and brushed snow over them to hide them. You couldn't even tell that they were there!

Finally a call came from Jackson. Did the Army unit in those Stryker vehicles get to the acreage yet they wanted to know? Oops.

"Jackson, this is Rob Zimmerman," the retired Sheriff said. "Why didn't you notify us that they were on the way? We just took out the two passes and installed our final defensive devices."

"Uh, sorry Sheriff," the voice responded, "We just sort of got busy..."

"Are you in radio contact with them?" Rob asked.

"Yes sir Sheriff," the dispatcher answered.

"You best tell them to hold off until we give you the all clear," Rob informed the dispatcher.

"Anyone know how to deactivate those mines?" Rob asked.

"I'll take care of it Rob," Ryan said. "I'll give you a call when I'm done."

"You be careful," Jennifer called to Ryan as he left.

It took Ryan a hell of a lot longer to safe the mines than it did to set them. It wasn't that hard if you really knew what you were doing, but it was nerve-wracking. Finally he called in that the mines were all out and that they could send the Army on the rest of the way to Benton Village.

It was a damned shame they didn't have any of the mines one could disarm by radio, but they were front line military hardware and impossible to come by. They needed to make sure that everyone knew what the Stryker looked like too. Needless to say, the Army Captain wasn't the happiest guy on the block by the time they'd manhandled the rocks out of the passes and made it to the Village.

"Who's in charge here," the Captain asked.

"I suppose that I am Rocky," Ryan said to the guy he'd gone to school with.

"Is that you Ryan?" Rocky asked.

"Yep. What brings you here?" Ryan responded.

"There are a bunch of Russians in the area and were just came to check up on you folks," Rocky said.

"How many Russians Rocky?" Ryan wanted to know.

"Maybe a couple of Companies," Rocky offered.

"Conscripts or Spetsnaz?" Ray asked.

"Conscripts. Do I know you?" Rocky said to Ray.

"He's my step dad Rocky," Ryan said, "I told you all about him."

"Nice to meet you sir," Rocky said. "Anyway, Ryan, like I said, it's what left of a Russian Battalion or whatever they call their unit. There are about 400 of them left, so about 2 Companies, I'd guess.

"Armor, Infantry, what?" Ryan continued.

"Uh, Infantry, mostly on foot, but they have some trucks," Rocky answered.

I appreciate you warning us Rocky," Ryan said. "But you should have had the Sheriff's office call ahead, and we wouldn't have blown the passes."

"I thought that they had Ryan, honest," Rocky replied sheepishly. "By the way, why did we have to wait so long?"

"Did you ever safe an anti-tank mine Rocky?" Ryan asked. "It takes time, you know."

"Uh, right," Rocky said avoiding that issue. "We'll make sure to call ahead next time."

"You do that," Ryan said.

## Mountain Man – Chapter 22 – The Agony of da Feet

No one paid particular attention to the Chinese. The Russians and Americans had watched, but other than noting that the Chinese seemed to be building a large fleet of oil supertankers, nothing seemed amiss. The Chinese were not responding to any form of communication and the Russians had had their boomers off the coast of China until the American thing came up. Then, they'd shifted their boomers to cover the Americans and those Americans had not only sunk their boomers, they'd sunk all of their submarines.

The war wasn't going as the Russians had expected. In the first place those damned AEGIS ships were better than they thought. They hadn't succeeded in destroying the American carriers. Of course they sunk some frigates and seriously damaged some of the Burke-class destroyers and the Ticonderoga-class cruisers, but the damage to the American fleet was far less than they had hoped.

They had managed to launch the conventional cruise missiles and they'd done their damage, but it was less than the Russians had hoped for. The American Army and Marines had been dispersed around the country and that had greatly interfered with their invasion. True, they'd managed to move both the first and second waves, almost 2 million soldiers to the US, but there were still over 200 million Americans and they all seemed to be armed to the teeth.

Now, their forces were on the run. They had to make a choice, either continue to fight or surrender and hope that the Americans would let their troops return to Russia. The debate raged for some time and the longer the Russians took to decide, the more men and equipment they lost.

The equipment was probably lost anyway, the Americans would probably just take it and melt it down and sell cheap steel for a while. There were a lot of recriminations from the old diehard Marshals, too, and the powers that be were being severely condemned for having wasted all of those missiles on the Middle East.

The Marshals were angry because it had taken years of denial, manipulation and lying to the Americans to conceal the extra 72% of their authorized missiles. And then, the Russian Republic had wasted, that's right wasted, that 72%. Now they were down to a dozen ICBM's and what could you do with a dozen ICBM's?

And what was with those Chinese and all of the oil tankers? Was China going to move in and take over the Middle East? Was that why they needed so many huge supertankers? In the end, the politicians won the debate and Russia notified its troops to surrender to the nearest American unit.

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Unfortunately, the two companies up in the Jackson Hole area didn't get the word because they were cut off and their radio was broken. And the Army was closing in, so

they ended up coming towards Benton Village. The gal up on the first pass now knew what a Stryker looked like but she didn't recognize the Russian trucks. Rather than make another mistake, she radioed in when the trucks were still 5 miles away. Ryan told her to blow the two passes again, Ron had replaced the charges, and she did. They rushed to re-lay the anti-tank mines and made it with time to spare.

While they were placing the mines, Rob called the dispatcher and made sure there were no more Army units in the area. Apprised that there were not, he asked the dispatcher to send them, they appeared to be having visitors. The Russians cleared the first pass and then the second. And when their trucks began to hit the mines, all hell broke loose.

To Ray, it seemed like Vietnam all over again. These soldiers might have been conscripts, but they had been fighting in the US for a long time. They fanned out and opened up on the Village with their 5.45x39mm rifles. Although outnumbered, the residents were better shots and had the advantage of cover and concealment.

The fight started out about 4 or 5 against 1. The Russians might have won if they'd had RPG's, weren't half starved and exhausted. But the superior marksmanship of the residents began to take its toll. The soldiers wore lightweight body armor so the Villagers used headshots.

The battle dragged on and the poorer marksmen were pressed into service reloading magazines for the people who were scoring kills but running low on ammo. The Russians tried to rush the huge compound, but ran smack dab into the anti-personnel mines and withdrew. Half the Russians lay dead or dying and a few of the residents were wounded. Jennifer bandaged the folks with lesser wounds and they got the more seriously wounded to the clinic.

The battle was still raging, though with less intensity, when the Stryker units arrived and engaged the Russian troops from the rear. The Stryker's had to stand off because of the mines, but the American troops boiled out of the troop-carrying model, the M1126, and joined the fray. Then, the Russians began to run out of ammunition and were finally overrun.

Less than 100 of the original more than 400 Russian soldiers escaped being wounded or killed. Only two of the Villagers were killed outright and Jennifer believed that every one one else would recover from their wounds. The wounds ranged from minor bullet grazes to serious life threatening injuries but she performed meatball surgery at break-neck speed and stopped only when the last person had been treated.

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The doctor from Jackson made one of his rare trips to Benton Village and checked on the wounded. He was highly complementary of Jennifer's work and vowed right then and there to see what he could do to get her fully licensed as a physician. In the after-

math, the anti-tank mines were exploded in place and the road repaired, it was just too dangerous to attempt to disarm them again.

The remaining anti-personnel mines were also destroyed in place; there was no good way to disarm them. The remainder of the heavy armaments were cleaned and stored; hopefully to never be used again. The residents buried their honored dead and tried to resume a normal life. This war was over.

They never repaired the fence; it remained as a stark memorial to the two who had lost their lives. All in all, nearly 100,000 Americans had died during the war and over ½ million had been injured. The Russians had lost ⅔ of their nearly 2 million troops. Eventually the Russian soldiers were repatriated and America moved on. The Pacific Fleet had been repaired and had put to sea again; the news just never made it to Jackson before the war ended. There was a lot of rebuilding to do.

A year later, the doctor succeeded in his quest. It hadn't been easy, but he had managed to get Jennifer licensed as a full-fledged physician. It was a momentous occasion. Powell had directed the Navy and Marines to take the Middle East.

The Russians didn't even resist, they just pulled up stakes and returned home. Powell had succeeded in reducing the cost of oil as he had hoped; the cost went from, \$40 dollars a barrel under the Russians, to the cost of pumping and transport, e.g., it was free. And, despite the sudden oil glut, the Congress mandated a minimum 30 mpg (city) for all new vehicles and refused to grandfather in anything that didn't get at least 20mpg (city).

◦

The year was 2019. Ray and Scott had finally given up on the exercise; it was just getting to be too much. They still walked a lot, Jennifer insisted on that, but more and more they rode a horse or drove a golf cart to get around. They still did a lot of shooting; hell everyone did a lot of shooting, because shooting was the official sport of the retirement community.

Ray decided to buy another 40 acres and put in another housing tract, but this one would be for a younger group of people, the seniors were getting too old to fight. He put Ryan in charge of the project, but gave him strict instructions. The same rules as before applied and the new residents all had to be survivalists; younger, healthy survivalists. And, no one with any sort of extreme philosophy would be allowed, except of course, being a survivalist wasn't considered as being an extreme philosophy. Mix it up, Ray said, let's get a lot of different skills for this community.

Ryan could remember back to the time when they'd first met Ray. Back then he'd been a loner with only a dog as a companion. Promise and her litter had long since died and been buried in an animal graveyard Ray set up. Now, in the twilight of his years, Ray seemed to yearn for companionship.

Ryan decided that they would put in a housing tract, setting manufactured housing on basements and equipping the homes to Ray's specs. The amenities wouldn't include a wet bar, it would be a gun safe instead. The new tract would contain 36 homes, all on 1-acre lots and would have a community center sitting on top of a community shelter right in the center of the tract.

There would be a tunnel system just as in the original tract and the tunnel systems would be interconnected. Ryan worried that they would have trouble selling the homes, but when they placed ads in several national newspapers, they had 5 or 6 applications for every home.

Even after carefully screening the applicants, they had almost 3 qualified applicants for every home, something Ryan hadn't anticipated. So, Ryan decided to convert 80 acres of his ranch where it adjoined Ray's 80 acres to additional housing. The summer of 2019 saw the first 36 homes go up and the following year Ryan put in the other 72 homes and buildings. They had to expand the warehouse and build a real grocery store and put in additional infrastructure, but that old line-shack and Ray had started something. Things were really changing at Benton Village.

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Colin Powell had served his two terms and retired to New York City. In his own way, Powell had forever changed America. Having suffered no worse under a black President, America was ready to elect the first female President and they did that in 2020. She was a moderate Republican, by the way, and the Republicans held on to control of Congress.

Perhaps because of all that had happened to America, the country was finally growing up. It wasn't so popular to be a liberal anymore and issues like abortion and homosexuality and the like were no longer front-page news.

America was changing and embracing a new conservatism. The homosexuals went back into the closet and the Congress passed a law outlawing abortions except in three cases: where it was therapeutically necessary, where the pregnancy resulted from a rape and where the pregnancy resulted from incest.

One of the byproducts of the new conservatism was a return to the values that the founders of the country had embraced back when they drew up the Constitution. The right to keep and bear arms was an Individual right and it had nothing to do with militias. The Congress also adopted a new model Criminal Justice System, with a focus on rehabilitation rather on the housing of criminals.

There were loud protests in the news media over the new laws, but Congress and the President didn't care. Neither did the American public; they liked the new laws. The days of the liberal press were nearing an end. Thank God. Oh, and God? He wasn't a

dirty word anymore. Prayer returned to the classroom and 'Under God' returned to the Pledge of Allegiance.

◦

And, all the while the Chinese had been building supertankers. Their fleet was large and growing larger. These weren't the fancy double-hulled oil transports that the environmentalists around the world had forced to be built; these were single hulled transports and they were only supertankers on the outside. On the inside they were very modern troop transports each capable of hauling a division of Army and their equipment. Maybe the world hadn't changed so much after all.

Oh yes it had, the CDC finally came up with a cure for AIDS. The cure attacked the heart of the HIV virus and it didn't matter how much the virus mutated, the cure still worked. What was left of the African population was saved, as were peoples around the world.

Europe was recovering nicely from the epidemic and all around the world life was getting better. And Kerry's NIDCS system was revamped and the cards now became Passports for real. The DNA sample was taken at birth and recorded in the national system. The ID cards/Passports were nominal in cost and the plan called for them to be updated every five years to keep the information current. All of the countries of the world, save one, adopted the new system.

The world truly was becoming a single community. There were still borders, but they were extremely porous in the sense that with the NIDCS like system, the true identity of a traveler was no longer a mystery.

Terrorism had waned and died in the aftermath of the Russians cleansing of the Middle East. Every living soul from Turkey to Saudi Arabia, Muslim, Christian and Jew had been killed. In other Muslim countries, the terrorists retired, fearful that the Russians would destroy their county. They embraced the true meaning of the Quran and returned to their roots. A new respect for religion and a new tolerance of the beliefs of others finally came to pass. By the end of 2020, the world was becoming a wonderful place.

◦

"Madam President, we have a problem," the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs told her.

"What kind of a problem General?" the President asked.

"It's the Chinese Madam President," the Chairman said. "As you were briefed when you took office, last month, the Chinese have been building a fleet of supertankers for years. We now believe that to be a ruse. There may not be enough oil in the world to fill that fleet of supertankers."



“If they are not supertankers General, then what are they?” the President asked.

“The intelligence community now believes that they are troop transports Madam President,” the Chairman responded.

“And what took the intelligence community so long to come to that conclusion?” the President asked. She didn’t think much of the intelligence community.

“Who knows with those people?” the Chairman responded in frustration. “They even keep their toilet paper purchases a secret so no one will know how many people they really have in their organizations. Anyway, the satellites were repositioned after the war with the Russians and recently, huge convoys have been seen traveling to the ports and simply disappearing.”

“Just how big is this threat General?” she asked.

“Given the number of ships, their projected capacity and so forth,” the General replied, “We estimate that the Chinese could send as many as 30 million fully-equipped troops against us.”

“Did I hear you right?” she asked, “30 Million?”

The General nodded.

“What about a first strike against the Chinese?” she asked.

“That wouldn’t be a good idea Madam President,” the General replied. “In the first place, most of our land based missiles have reached the end of their useful service lives; in the second place, even though our boomers are still fully mission capable, we have no idea what the Chinese have done in the years since the virus. For all we know, they have more missiles than we do. And, in the third place, no one wins an all-out nuclear exchange, look at what the Russians did to the Middle East.”

“What are my alternatives then, General?” she asked.

“We propose sending our attack submarines to sink as many of the Chinese ships as possible Madam President, but no doubt some of the Chinese ships will get through,” the General replied.

“Ok General, sortie the boats and I’ll get back to you,” she concluded the meeting.

“Thank you Madam President,” the General replied and left.

The President consulted with her Cabinet and with the leaders of Congress. They agreed with her assessment of the situation and approved of the action she had taken. An emergency appropriations bill made it through Congress and was her desk ready to

be signed within 48-hours. They didn't have much time and the entire country, especially the MIC, went onto an immediate war footing.

The factories began running 24/7 turning out munitions and matériel. The best estimate gave the US only 90-days to prepare for the invasion and the worst estimate gave only 30-days; it all depended upon when the Chinese set sail. They figured it would take anywhere from 30-45 days for the Chinese to cross the Pacific, depending upon which way they came and the speed of the ships and weather conditions and 100 other factors. What they really needed was a typhoon to strike the Chinese fleet and sink the ships. Wish in one hand...the Japanese call that type of typhoon Kamikaze.

◦

Ray hadn't been himself of late. Stacy tried to get out of him what was bugging him, but she got nowhere. Then Ryan tried and had similar results. Finally Jennifer tried the "tell the doctor" routine, hoping that Ray had an ache or pain that he just wasn't talking about. Nothing. Then, Stacy started to get angry.

You know how a redhead is when she gets angry, right? It all stemmed, it seemed, to a rather minor incident that had happened about a month earlier. One of their many cats, Cookie, had gotten sick on a Saturday. She was 14 years old and fat. She and Ray had talked about it and Ray had said that Cookie [Siamese] was pretty old and overweight and that he didn't want to spend "hundreds of dollars" on Vet bills for a 14-year old cat.

Anyway, they had waited until the following Tuesday to take Cookie to the Vet. Ray had stayed home and she had made the trip to Jackson. The Vet started an IV, Cookie had stopped drinking water, but Cookie had died right there on the table in front of Stacy.

When she'd gotten home, Stacy had been pretty upset and perhaps without meaning to do so had made Ray feel guilty about Cookie dying. He was such a cheap bastard at times! Anyway, feeling like he did, Ray had gone on the net to see how his readership was accepting the latest chapter of his novelette based on their life. More than one well-meaning fellow had corrected Ray on a minor point and implied that Ray had been wrong about something else.

Given the guilt Ray was already feeling when he read the comments, Ray had gotten really upset and had stopped writing his fiction. He had just left them hanging right in the middle of the story. Then Ray started to feel guilty about that and what it really boiled down to was that all of that guilt made Ray angry and he had turned the anger inward. Anger turned inward has another name: depression. To make matters worse, Ryan had confided to Stacy that he was getting that sinking feeling again and that might be adding to Ray's depression.

◦

The Chinese were further along with their preparations than the Americans realized. Even while the Chairman briefed the President, the final units arrived at the port and before the appropriations bill was on her desk, they began to set sail. The ships sailed not in a convoy, but individually, making the task of the American boats very difficult.

Half of the 108 attack submarines were in the Atlantic and half in the Pacific. While the boomers had torpedoes, they had a more important job, positioning themselves for an attack against China if it came to that. The US employed the same tired old strategy of setting up a carrier screen 200 miles off the US coast to repel any of ships that made it past the attack subs. Given all of its military assets, the US should have been able to prevent the invasion entirely, but there was no logic to the sailing patterns the Chinese ships took, at least not discernible to the occidental mind.

The US hadn't had time to replace the frigates that the Russians had sunk and some of the Burke-class destroyers had been repaired and returned to sea so fast that they were forced back for more repairs. The US had started at the top and worked its way down, repairing the carriers, then the cruisers and finally the destroyers.

A lot of destroyers had taken serious damage and in the rush to return them to sea, the overworked yards had cut a few too many corners or had missed damage that later surfaced. Thus it came to be that the American ASW capacity wasn't up to its usual standards. While the Chinese submarine fleet wasn't large compared to the American submarine fleet, it existed nevertheless and was deployed against the American carrier screen. These Americans were so predictable one Chinese Admiral gloated to another.

A dozen submarines were up against 6 carrier task groups and the task groups included some of the 688I Los Angeles class submarines. When the Chinese mariners bade their families' goodbye before setting off on their mission, they warned them that it could be a one-way mission.

The American attack boats sailed at flank speed, hoping to catch the Chinese super tankers in port, but they were less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the way when they received ELF transmissions telling them to surface for a burst radio transmission. The message was stark, "The Chinese have sailed." The boats continued, presuming that the Chinese would be sailing in a convoy. However when a sub sighted and sank a single super tanker, and reported the sinking to ComSubPac, the Americans learned of the irregular sailing pattern.

It was a real scramble as the American subs tried to locate and sink the transports. Every ship they sighted sank to a watery grave, but they were so widely scattered that about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the transports made it past them and slowly converged on the American fleet.

Back during the Kerry presidency, all of the F-14 Tomcats had been retired, somewhat diminishing the capacity of the American carrier fleets. Powell hadn't had the opportunity to replace the aircraft, though a replacement was in the offing. The F/A-18 could carry

and launch the AGM84D Harpoon missile, but that was a standoff land attack missile, not the anti-ship version. Only the Super Hornets carried the anti-ship version.

Because of the absent frigates and destroyers the fleet's capacity to interdict the Chinese fleet was less than optimal. It was made all the worse by the presence of the Chinese submarines. Frigates were the primary ASW vessels, then the destroyers and finally the cruisers. The Chinese subs held the attention of the destroyers, what there were of them, and the cruisers, interfering with their ability to attack the transports with their Harpoons.

Of the vast armada of ships that departed China, barely 15% of them made landfall on the American coast and were able to discharge their cargos before the aircraft sank the ships. All of those ships, 15 years of construction, lay on the bottom and the Chinese were stranded in the US, cut off from home.

Interestingly, having never engaged the enemy, 10 of the 12 Chinese submarines made it back to China, much to the delight of the families of the mariners. 4.5 million Chinese soldiers were faced off against 15 Divisions of Army plus the Marines and the National Guard along the west coast of the United States.

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At Benton Village, Stacy had about had enough of Ray's depression. She figured that she had to get him to turn the anger outward and decided to pick a fight with him. Maybe if she could get him good and worked up, he'd get out of his funk.

Sometimes plans work too well. She started pushing buttons and finally struck a nerve. Ray got angry and stayed angry. And, just when he seemed to be getting over it, the TV began broadcasting word of a possible Chinese invasion. Chinese? Ray really went off then, saying how he'd figured that the virus had killed off all the Chinese and why hadn't the administration kept a closer watch on the Chinese and on and on and on.

Stacy decided it was time to retreat; at least Ray wasn't depressed anymore. However, some of the things he said in one breath contradicted things he said in the next breath. She got out the M-21 and the M-24 and dragged him to the range. That usually allowed him to vent.

Ryan had been able to replace the destroyed mines with the new generation NSD-A mines. Originally conceived as an anti-personnel mine, later generations had included anti-tank versions as well. Given that the mines were the state of the art and current military inventory, it was surprising that Ryan had been able to get any of the mines at all. Persistence, military contacts and a fat checkbook had paid off and Ryan had ringed the four-section complex with anti-personnel mines and permanently installed the anti-tank mines in the road.

Ryan had added the remainder of the things on his wish list, too and although M72 LAW rockets were unavailable, he had a good supply of the now obsolete AT-4's. There was also an obsolete Mk-19 mounted on top of each of the community centers. He had added a community center to the original 40-acre tract and except for the fact that some of the original buildings and the propane tanks were on the original parcel each section was self-sufficient. Each section, for example, had its own well and 60,000-gallon water storage. Wyoming had reopened the passes and had graded them wide enough so that it was impractical to consider trying to close them.

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"Are you feeling better?" Stacy asked.

"I guess. Why did you pick that fight?" Ray countered.

"You've been in a funk, honey. I had to do something to get you out of it," Stacy explained.

"Weren't you afraid of giving me a heart attack or a stroke?" Ray asked, "I'm not a kid anymore."

"There's nothing wrong with your heart you dirty old man," Stacy laughed.

"Maybe we'd better test your hypothesis," Ray winked.

"Which part? The dirty old man or the heart?" Stacy asked playfully.

"Yes," Ray answered.

Later Ray got with Ryan to discuss the Chinese invasion.

"Are you feeling better?" Ryan asked.

"I expect so Ryan," Ray responded, "what do you make of this Chinese invasion?"

"The news media risked a helicopter flyby and sent back some interesting pictures," Ryan said. "The Chinese apparently have a new model of tank. They moved a lot of armor over here. I don't know what to make of the new tanks. Most of their tanks appear to be the older T-98 type-80 tanks with the 125mm cannon. They have a better tank, the T-99, but haven't built many due to the high cost. These new boys look more like an Abrams. And, there appear to be two models, one equipped with the 125mm cannon and some equipped with a shorter, fatter barrel."

"What do you make of that?" Ray asked.

"I have no idea Ray," Ryan said, "But it could be a missile launcher."

In fact, the Chinese had been able to acquire a disabled Abrams tank and a TOW equipped Hummer from the Iraqis before the Russians destroyed the Middle East. The Chinese had spent considerable time dismantling and analyzing the tank and had produced what would have been a M1A4 version of the tank.

The new Chinese tanks came with either the standard 125mm cannon or what amounted to a TOW launcher. The Chinese had also evaluated the American 120mm rounds for the Abrams cannon and had produced a 125mm version that was just a bit more powerful than its American prototype. The M1A3 fielded improved armor and could withstand a strike from the new Chinese 125mm rounds, barely, but the TOW-like missiles could penetrate up to 30" of armor.

"What is the state of our preparations?" Ray asked.

"Where should I begin?" Ryan asked. "The diesel and gasoline tanks are full. We have 142,000-gallons of propane. The grocery warehouse has about a nine-month supply of regular food and there is about a month's worth on the grocery store shelves. Every family has their one-year supply for every member of the family plus whatever they have on the shelves. I don't think food is going to be a problem. It's times like these that I appreciate your insistence that everyone living here is survival minded and is well prepared."

"As far as armaments go," Ryan continued, "We have the Mk-19's and Ma Deuces on top of each community center as well as a 120mm mortar. The road is mined with those new NSD-A anti-tank mines and the entire perimeter is mined with the NSD-A anti-personnel mines. We can monitor the entire perimeter from any of the 4 main shelters using the TV cameras. I frankly don't know how we could be any more prepared."

"Still don't have any tanks, huh?" Ray laughed.

## Mountain Man – Chapter 23 – Let's Do Chinese

During the analysis and design phase of their new T-109 tank, the Chinese discovered that the turbine engine in the Abrams tank had its shortcomings. They decided to use the 1,500hp liquid cooled diesel engines from the T-99. They also opted to use the 125mm gun from the T-98 on the majority of the new tanks. One of the advantages of the Abrams was its speed; another was its armor. It was no mean feat, but the Chinese were able to duplicate and improve on the British designed armor used by the Americans. It was Chobham II, upgraded by the Americans with DU. The only thing was that their improved version was a little bit heavier. They decided to enhance the armor protection on the top of the turret, too, a traditional weak point on a tank. Not a lot, but it added to the weight. Anyway the new T-109 came in at 72 tons, give or take, depending on its armament. And it sacrificed about 15kmh, moving at a paltry 45kmh. The new canon rounds were a great advance for them, but only marginally better than the American rounds.

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The Pentagon had appointed a 4-star to be in overall charge of the defense of the nation if the Chinese managed to get through. The man was battle tested, but rather conventional in his approach. The scene was the Situation Room at the White House, while the Chinese were still unloading their supertankers. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs had been droning on for 20 minutes and Madam President was getting bored, she'd heard all of the crap about 3 times already.

Frankly, though she wasn't a soldier, the planned defense of the nation bothered her. It was beginning to appear that the Chinese had the US outnumbered 2 to 1 and they had some new super tank. Her attention was drawn to a Lt. General sitting in a back row who appeared to be engaged in an animated conversation with a colleague seated next to him. She recognized the Lt. General, he was a hero of the Russian invasion and was known to have employed unconventional tactics against the Russians.

Lt. General Lance Soblick disagreed with the planned defense. He felt that the US would get its rear kicked big time using a conventional approach to the forthcoming battle. He was a wild card much in the manner of the famous WW II General George Patton. He had been attempting to explain how he'd fight the battle to his colleague when the President interrupted the proceedings.

"Excuse me, General, I'd like to hear what General Soblick has to say, he seems to disagree with you," the President said. "General Soblick, front and center!"

Lance was so engrossed in his explanation that he missed the President's statement and it wasn't until his colleague nudged him and nodded towards the President that he even realized that he was now the center of attention. He stood and addressed that skirt running the country.

“Ma’am?” Lance said.

“You seem to disagree with the Chairman and I’d like to hear what you think,” the President said.

“It was nothing Madam President. Just a minor disagreement over some fine points,” Lance said attempting to avoid further conversation and remove himself from the lime-light.

“Nonsense,” she replied, “The way you were flailing around back there, it appeared as if you were directing a symphony. I want to hear what you have to say. Front and center, General, and that’s an order.”

Lance reluctantly came forward. What the hell, the defense plan was a disaster and since he could now think of his military career only in the past tense, he decided to say what he really thought. He took the podium. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs didn’t like his subordinate and his face was cherry-red.

“Madam President, Mr. Chairman,” Lance began, “We’re going to get our rears kicked! It looks like we’re going to be outnumbered 2 to 1 and despite all of our air assets, I think a conventional approach to this battle is a mistake.”

“That much was obvious, General,” the President interrupted, “What would you do if you were in charge?”

“Why Ma’am, I do what any sensible person would do in a situation like this. I’d run like hell!” Lance replied.

“Explain yourself General,” the President said somewhat taken aback by his response.

For the next 90 minutes, Lance outlined his approach. The US was facing the Chinese essentially of three fronts, a northern front near Seattle, a second front near San Francisco, and a southern front in the Los Angeles area. The Chinese had brought so many SAM’s that air attacks were risky at best. Lance explained how he would withdraw his forces eastward along interstates 90, 80 and 10.

Massed under a SAM umbrella, the Chinese would be a most difficult enemy, but if we could string them out, we could use our Apaches and their Hellfire missiles and our old Warhogs and our JSOWs and kick their oriental behinds. There was much more to his plan, but you should have the idea by now.

“I approve General. How would you like to be in charge of the defense?” the President asked.

“Madam President, I protest,” the Chairman of the Joint Chief’s rose to his feet, face even redder.



“Sit down and shut up General,” the President said. She turned to the Leaders of the House and Senate who were present.

“Gentlemen, if I submit a nomination for a promotion to 4-star General for General Soblick, can you fast track it?”

“Congratulations General Soblick,” the Leader of the Senate said. “You’d better start wearing those stars tonight or you’ll be out of uniform.”

The Chairman of the Joint Chief’s stood to protest. The President stood and whispered in his ear. He sat down and shut up. The President had said he could go along with her or resign, but he had better decide quickly or she’d publicly ask for his resignation.

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Lance Soblick had been a ‘firstie’ when Ryan Williams had been a plebe. He had followed Ryan’s career with interest right up until Ryan had been shot and booted out of the Army. Lance knew Rocky, too and Rocky had come out of the war with Russia as a Bird Colonel, having received a whirlwind of promotions much as he had.

Lance met with the President after the meeting and made two extremely unusual requests. He wanted Rocky promoted from bird Colonel to Major General and placed in charge of the southern force. He wanted Ryan Williams recalled to active duty at the rank of Major General and to be placed in charge of the northern force. He had an existing 2-star in mind to command the central force and he would command the overall operation from the northern force.

Do you think our new 4-star General is crazy? Wait, it gets better! A few hours later, a Blackhawk helicopter landed at Benton Village. Major General Rocky Marsten was aboard and the shine on those new stars was apparent. Rocky had orders for Ryan, signed by the President herself. Ryan read the orders in disbelief.

He had been a Captain when he had been booted out, receiving a compassionate promotion while in Walter Reed. Were they insane? Well, at least his BDU’s still fit. Rocky was in a hurry and he told Ryan that he had been just as surprised as Ryan when Lance had talked the President into this nonsense, but orders were orders, get a move on.

Jennifer hurriedly packed Ryan’s things while he showered and shaved. They barely had time for a kiss before Ryan was aboard the helicopter and headed out. Hours later, Ryan found himself in Olympia, Washington standing face-to-face with Lance Soblick.

“Are you out of your mind General?” Ryan greeted Lance.

“Hell Ryan, you did good at the Point and had an impressive record right up until you got booted out,” Lance responded. “How is the knee?”

“The knee is fine General, but the question was, are you out of your mind?” Ryan replied.

“Ryan, call me Lance,” Lance said, “You too Rocky. Out of my mind? Maybe and maybe not. I need unconventional thinkers to make this work. You’ve built quite a little fortress there in Jackson Hole, Ryan. Is there anyone you didn’t corrupt getting that place put together?”

“Not many,” Ryan admitted.

“Ok, that’s out of the way. Here’s what we’re going to do...” Lance explained.

For the next two hours, Lance, Ryan, Rocky and the 2-star who was to command the central force went over their plans. Earlier in the century, the expression out-of-the-box thinking had been popular. The thinking here, around this table was so out-of-the-box that had the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs been there, he’d have had them all thrown in Leavenworth.

Basically the strategy was a feint, followed by a seemingly disorganized withdrawal to sucker the Chinese into following. They would then attack the Chinese from the flanks, using the Abrams against the T-98’s and the Apaches, vehicles armed with TOW missiles and the Warthogs and fighters to take out the enemy force. Then, they would re-attack the Chinese and repeat the process. With any kind of luck, they could whittle the Chinese down to a 1 to 1 ratio before they had to change tactics.

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## **Day 1 Benton Village**

Ray was really put out that Ryan had taken off and left him in charge of the defenses at the Village. He was just too damned old for it. On the other hand, Ryan had done a good job of setting up their defenses and the Chinese were a long way away on the Pacific coast.

There were about 300 people living in the Village and few of them were children. Everyone who wasn’t a child was a well-schooled shooter. Ray decided that the greatest weakness of the Village lay in its concrete block wall. He decided to construct a second wall inside of the original wall and fill the 6’ between the walls with compacted earth.

Ryan wasn’t gone an hour before he was on the phone with a contractor in Jackson arranging for the new wall. The new wall would total 2-miles of block and would be frightfully expensive. And, it would take a lot of time to construct. He would start with the

southern exposure and then do the eastern exposure, followed by the western and northern exposures.

The contractor could start right away, and could get block delivered in no time, so the construction process could be continuous. Yes, he could get enough masons to work 24/7, but it would really hike the cost. "Do it!" Ray had said.

## **Day 1**

### **The White House**

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was in the Situation Room bitching about Lance's plans. He had a spy in Lance's camp and thought the plan was sheer madness. First, the President toyed with the General until he reluctantly revealed who the spy was. Then...

"Have your resignation on my desk within the hour General," she demanded.

Duplicitous son-of-a-bitch.

"Yes Ma'am," the General had said and stormed out before she could tell him to get his sorry rear out of her White House.

"Speaking of rears," she thought, "That Lance had a nice rear on him, I wonder if he's married." Her husband had died before she could be sworn in, a victim of cancer. That had been worth a few million votes.

Madam President! Really! You have at least fifteen years on the General, but if you must know, he is single.

## **Day 1**

### **Southern Front**

Rocky had his work cut out for him. A million and a half Chinese troops, replete with armor had landed on the coast all of the way from Santa Barbara in the north to La Jolla in the south. They were engaging the population, who, despite California's stupid gun laws were armed to the teeth. However, rifles were no match for the tanks and at best the population was slowing the Chinese advance.

He made his first feint and withdrew along the I-10 corridor towards the Inland Empire. Although the withdrawal appeared disorganized, it was not and fighter aircraft were standing by at March and Edwards together with Apaches to hit the Chinese. Along the way they had dropped off vehicles equipped with TOW missiles, just as had been planned.

## **Day 1**

### **Central Front**

Things weren't much different on the Central Front. The Chinese had landed all of the way from Bodega Bay in the north to Monterey in the south. They had avoided landing on the Peninsula itself and had blown through all of those computer geeks in the San Jose area like they weren't even there. Was there perhaps more than one reason why the Chinese had avoided San Francisco?

Could have anything to do with all of the closets in that city? Hard to say, but the enemy was generally in the East Bay area to the north of San Pedro Bay, strung out along a many mile front. The General made his first feint and withdrew towards Sacramento in order to pick up I-80 East. The Chinese were really going to be in for a surprise when they got to Donner Pass in the coming days or weeks.

## **Day 1**

### **Northern Front**

The Chinese had landed from Pacific Beach in the north to North Cove in the South. This front was going to be the most difficult of the three to manage. They wanted to keep the Chinese south of the Seattle/Tacoma area if possible. They had the Cascade Range to deal with, too. They made their feint west of Chehalis and began to retreat along highway 12. They wanted to pull the Chinese east to I-90.

Lance sent out word to evacuate Spokane and areas along the way. Aircraft were dispersed in the Seattle area and all the way south to Portland. Given the various mountain ranges they had to deal with, they saw no choice except to possibly sacrifice Spokane if it got that far. Little did Lance realize that his tactic, while brilliant, would see them backing up all of the way to the Rocky Mountains.

## **Day 1**

### **The Chinese**

The Chinese commanders were in constant contact by radio. They hadn't expected the Americans to hit and run and had anticipated a pitched battle. When they compared notes, they concluded that the Americans must have some elaborate plan in the works, but for the life of them they couldn't imagine what it might be.

They expected the Americans to defend their homeland fiercely as they had with the Russians. They had followed the war with the Russians with their satellites and in that war the Americans had stood and fought. What was this strategy? Had the Americans suddenly turned cowardly? Ever cautious, the Chinese sent the new T-109 tanks for-

ward to meet the Abrams that no doubt were waiting for them just around the next bend in the road.

## **Day 2 Benton Village**

The contractor was there and putting in footings for the new wall. One of the residents had suggested that the wall would be stronger if they filled it with soil, stone and concrete. Ray gave the contractor the change order and addressed a second suggestion. The second suggestion was to build cattle traps across the roads in the two passes.

The cattle traps would go the width of the passes and be 20' deep and 20' long. They would build grates out of ½" plate, cutting them in 6" wide strips and standing them on edge to form the grates. Each grate would be 10' long and they would support the grates in the middle with a series of I-beams that could be removed after the grates were removed. They would, in effect create a massive tank trap in each pass.

An enemy could fill in the cavity with dirt and continue forward, but that would take time. Time they could use to shell the enemy with those 120mm mortars and employ the AT-4's. They didn't think it would ever come to that, but...

## **Day 2 Southern Front**

The Chinese T-109's were strung out all the way from Los Angeles to Pomona. Rocky called in the air strikes and instructed his command to open fire with the TOW missiles. In under an hour, all of the Chinese armor was in ruins. The Chinese had been cautious, employing only the best of their tanks.

Rocky examined one of the vehicles and discovered that it was a virtual copy of the American Abrams. The only discernible difference he could find was in the engine and in the choice of armament. The Chinese seemed to have developed a missile based on the American TOW. He passed that along via the Central Front to Lance. Watch out for those short barreled tanks he warned, they were TOW missile launchers instead of canons.

His infantry forces didn't meet the Chinese soldiers face-to-face; they sniped at them and shot them from the sides of the road. Rocky estimated that the enemy had lost as much as 3% of its forces in the carnage.

## **Day 2 Central Front**

The General should have withdrawn further, but not having done so forced the Chinese to be more tightly grouped and more susceptible to the air assault. The Central Front had taken out the Chinese tanks just as the Southern Front had. Some of the Chinese infantry had managed to withdraw, but the day was an overall success.

The General wondered if his counterpart would fall for the same ruse a second time. He had some experience in dealing with the Chinese over his military career and had always found the Chinese quick to adjust their approach. This commander had sent over 5% of his force and the Central command had greater numerical success than had the Southern command. However, the Central command had also experienced higher losses than the Southern command.

## **Day 2**

### **Northern Front**

Ryan had withdrawn his forces to the Cascade Range. The Chinese began to roll in his direction and when they were strung out for miles, Ryan ordered the assault to begin. This Chinese commander didn't halt his advance and continued to pour more and more troops and armor into the fray until the roads became impassible and he was forced to halt.

Good, they needed time to get Ryan's forces through the mountains. No doubt the Chinese would clear the roads and pursue them, but to make sure, Ryan ordered limited air strikes against the Chinese rear. He conferred with Lance and suggested that they wouldn't have more than one more day before the Chinese changed tactics. The enemy losses approached 8%.

## **Day 2**

### **The White House**

The Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was acting in his predecessor's stead. This Admiral wasn't nearly as foolish as his predecessor and he simply passed Lance's report on without much additional comment. The President wanted to know if the Admiral thought that the average 5% loss of enemy equipment and combatants was good. He assured the President that it was a very good first day. He also warned her that the enemy was no slouch and probably wouldn't fall for the same ruse twice. Madam President couldn't get past thinking about Lance's rear. She had a pretty good idea who her next Chairman was going to be.

## **Day 2**

### **The Chinese**

The Chinese commanders couldn't get over how Oriental the thinking was behind the Americans ruse that had cost them about 5% of their forces. Well, they wouldn't fall for that again. If they did, this conflict would be over in 3 weeks and they were cutoff, essentially behind enemy lines as it were.

China didn't have many of the AN-124s and couldn't afford to waste them trying to re-supply them. And the only transports carrying aircraft and pilots lay on the bottom of the Pacific. They were a long way from home and on their own.

It is said that even the greatest plan never survives first contact with the enemy or the first shot being fired or something like that, maybe both. The Chinese plan certainly hadn't survived the first American shots by the Virginia class submarines and the Pacific Fleet. 85% of their force had not made it to the US. And none of their aircraft had. And then, in their first real combat with the American military, they had been duped into believing that they had the Americans on the run.

If the Americans tried the same ruse again, they simply would not pursue. Instead, they would try to flank the Americans and attack them where they lay in wait.

## **Day 2 – Evening Benton Village**

With the footings going in nicely for the south wall and the tank trap construction well under way, Ray decided to rest and catch the news on the TV. The contractor wanted \$30 a lineal foot for the wall. Since there was 2,640 feet in each of the four walls, Ray had realized that each wall was going to run almost \$80 thousand before they were filled.

That idea of filling the walls with rock and concrete was a good one, but Ray decided that they would fill the walls themselves and make sure that they could build the entire wall around the tract. Well, maybe to the south and east, only; they were thinking of expanding to the north in the future. Maybe the west, but he wouldn't build an interior north wall. It was a good thing he could change his plans along the way if he needed to.

The news was cheerful, in a grim sort of way. The US forces had suckered the Chinese and had eliminated about 5% of the total Chinese force. Ray wondered what trick the US had up its sleeve for the next day.

## **Day 2 – Night Northern Front**

Lance agreed with the assessments of his subordinate commanders. They would need to do something different. What would he do if he were the Chinese commanders? He'd flank the Americans, he decided, and he had better set his forces to repel a flanking at-

tack. He sent word to Rocky, the Central command and notified Ryan in person. Forget the feint, just pull back and be prepared for the Chinese to attack our forces from the flank, he advised.

### **Day 3 Central Front**

The General decided that Lance was up to the task after all. He pulled his troops back and dropped them off starting near Clipper Gap and continuing all of the way to Emigrant Gap. As rugged as this terrain was, he figured his troops would get a chance to rest.

He ordered them to divide their attention between I-80 and their flanks. He sent word ahead to begin evacuating Reno and told his troops to get some rest, they would probably have a pretty busy Day 4. Most of the battle seasoned NCO's thought this plan had a lot of merit; usually it was the US forces being the victim of hit and run tactics. It was nice to have the shoe on the other foot for a change.

*What Price Glory?* A silent film based on a play (1926) and a war film based only on the title and characters (1952). *Military glory – the attractive rainbow that rises in showers of blood*, was according to Abraham Lincoln. *Now I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country,*” George S. Patton. *There is no glory in war; there is only fighting and dying, the glory comes later when someone tries to explain to a Mother why her son or daughter died in a far off land.* Who said that?

### **Day 3 Northern Front**

As predicted there was little activity on the Northern Front of the third day of the war. The troops moved into their new positions and the Chinese moved to flank them.

### **Day 3 Southern Front**

Rocky pulled his forces back to east of Palm Springs area along I-10. They sat down to wait for the enemy. They were getting away from the population centers and the fighters and bombers and helicopters would have more freedom of action. Rocky was beginning to sense that this was going to be a long, drawn out affair.

Further to the east, California became less populated and they would have total freedom to attack the enemy. At least in fighting the way they had been, they'd had the choice of locations and this was the best one yet. He presumed that when they came,



the Chinese would use infantry for the attack and the tanks to back them up. On this day, they had no contact with the enemy.

### **Day 3 The Chinese**

The Americans hadn't struck them and run and the Chinese commanders were confused. They had expected another feint and a withdrawal, but the Americans had just withdrawn. That forced them to continue their movements to flank the Americans and disrupted their timetable. But they moved on and eventually a scout or scouts located the enemy in their new positions. They planned to attack just before dawn on the 4th day along all three fronts. The Chinese in the Central and Northern sectors were experiencing extreme difficulties because of the terrain and were the last to get into position.

### **Day 3 Benton Village**

There was no new news of the war. The President had ordered a total news blackout. The gates for the cattle crossing were nearing completion, but the holes still weren't ready. The fence was beginning to appear as the masons worked from the center to the ends of the southern wall. They were hauling the dirt they were removing from the cattle crossing pits to use to partially fill the 6' area between the two fences.

The contractor informed Ray that the \$30 per foot charge was day shift only, evening shift was going to cost him \$36 per foot and graveyard shift was going to cost him \$42 per foot. Ray told him not to slow down on his account, but to forget the north wall; they weren't going to double that wall up. Ray also informed him that they would fill the area between the walls themselves and that the east and west walls could be constructed only during the day shift.

### **Day 4 Northern Front**

The troops were spread out all of the way from the summit near the state 123/US12 junction all the way east to Naches. Most of the soldiers were happy they weren't Chinese, it was tough enough just getting to their positions; how hard had it been for the Chinese?

The attack came just before dawn. The Chinese were unaccustomed and ill prepared for mountain fighting and they were easily repelled. Ryan advised Lance that they should stay where they were for the moment; let the Chinese try it again the next day, because the American position was clearly superior.

## **Mountain Man – Chapter 24 – Trapped**

### **Day 4 Southern Front**

It was a furious attack that came against the Southern command. No longer hemmed in by cities, the Chinese were able to bring the full force of their Army and tanks into a coordinated attack on the Americans flank. Rocky had his forces well dug in and the TOW's decimated the T-109's while the Abrams did the same to the T-98's. The Air Force was free to fly and although they lost several planes to the upgraded SA-7 missiles, their CBU's cut wide swaths through the Chinese infantry.

American casualties were higher than expected, however and many of the M1A3 tanks succumbed to the TOW equipped T-109's before the new tanks were taken out. Rocky's forces included the Marines from Camp Pendleton and they fought with uncharacteristic valor on that day, at times being forced to resort to hand-to-hand combat when the Chinese successfully penetrated their defenses. Eventually, the Chinese withdrew to regroup and Rocky took advantage in the lull in fighting to pull out to the east.

It was during this withdrawal that Rocky came to see what Ryan had realized the day before. A tank is an open country vehicle. Witness what the Russians had done with the T-34's against Germany in WW II. Russia was essentially a huge plain and the Russians had spread out and used the open country to their advantage.

As they began climbing the long grade out of Indio, it occurred to Rocky that this area was perfect to defend. The Chinese would be strung out in a narrow corridor all the way to Chiraco Summit. These mountains were not the place for tanks. No doubt that explained Lance's choices of their exit routes; all passed through some sort of mountainous terrain. Maybe he could check out the General Patton Museum in Chiraco Summit.

### **Day 4 Central Front**

The Chinese brought their tanks up I-80; there was no other way to reach the Americans. Their infantry had to make the flanking attack unaided and unsupported. It was sleeting and the Air Forces were grounded. The terrain was the Americans greatest ally that day because it slowed the movement of the Chinese Infantry and left them open to the vast array of American guns.

Of course, it would have been a much more successful day had the jets and helicopters had been able to fly, but one takes what one can get. The General moved his troops slightly to the east near the end of the day, entering Donner Pass with his forward elements. Clear skies were forecast for the next day. Perhaps the jets would get a break and peel off another layer or two of the Chinese armor.

## **Day 4**

### **The Chinese**

The American strategy was now clear to the Chinese commanders. The Americans were forcing them to string out their forces by advancing along a narrow line. They had some nominal successes during this day of battle, but they were realizing that they were losing more than they were gaining. The terrain did not favor their armor and was rendering it useless.

They decided to hold their armor back on the next day and attack the Americans using their smaller artillery pieces. It was certainly going to be difficult getting that artillery into position. The artillery gave them the advantage of a standoff weapon and their troops could regroup and reform.

Overall, they estimated that their losses had reached almost 20%. This only reinforced the fear that it would be all over in 3 weeks. What they wouldn't give to have even one shipload of planes and pilots. The only upside, if you could call it that, was that with their losses, their supply situation had improved because fewer tanks and fewer soldiers meant fewer munitions expended.

## **Day 4**

### **Benton Village**

The tank trap was finally excavated and the concrete formed and poured. The contractor was coming along extremely well with the south inner wall. The residents began to fill the space between the walls with the earth excavated from the tank traps. The first trap ended up being 120' wide, edge-to-edge and the second trap 135' wide edge-to-edge.

Ray made a quick calculation and realized that they had more than enough dirt from the two pits to fill the southern wall. In fact, they had about 7,000 cubic feet of dirt more than they would need. The problem would be getting dirt for the eastern wall. He got Scott and the two of them set out to find an area where they could mine soil as opposed to stripping off all of their precious topsoil.

The dirt wasn't that deep in most locations here in the mountains. They used a 10' rod and a sledgehammer, but the deepest soil they found that day was barely 6' deep before they hit rock. They wanted to find someplace where they could dig a trench at least 20' wide and 20' deep for a considerable distance. Every foot of trench yielded enough soil to fill about 11' of the fence.

The TV was still blacked out and Ray wasn't hearing much on the shortwave bands. The most he could piece together was that the American troops were fighting on three

fronts and all three fronts were in mountainous terrain. He harkened to that news, mountains weren't tank country and it would expose the enemy to the American air assault.

That was, providing the planes could fly. Aircraft were great support if the weather didn't interfere. Ask the 101st, his old unit. They had been trapped in that damned forest unable to get air support when the Germans counterattacked during WW II. It was one of the most famous battles in the history of the 101st and they called it *The Battle of the Bulge*.

### **An Interlude...**

After 4 days of continuous fighting and troop movements everyone was exhausted; the Chinese and the Americans took a day off to issue supplies, reorganize their units and to simply rest. Both sides needed to reevaluate their approach to the seemingly nonstop battle. Americans brought up new supplies of fuel for their vehicles and more munitions from supply units stationed ahead of them on their line of march.

Lance held a videoconference with his commanders. They discussed the pros and cons of remaining in the mountains. So far the weather had favored their venture, but the weatherman was advising of a late season storm off the Pacific coast. The storm was massive and reached from southern Canada to Baja. It was early March and a late season storm closing one or more of the passes was an extreme likelihood, the weatherman had said.

Lance gave orders to move the Northern command to Spokane, the Central command to Reno and Southern command towards Blythe. Let the Chinese pursue and if anyone was to be caught in the snows, presuming they came, let it be the Chinese. Lance also admitted to his commanders that he was having trouble coming up with ideas for new ways to surprise the Chinese and ask them to think it over and get back to him in 24-hours with any suggestions.

The Chinese were even more exhausted than the Americans. Their forces had been forced to move through snow in an attempt to flank the Americans and they were spent. This campaign wasn't going the way they had anticipated at all. Those Americans were avoiding a head-on confrontation and forcing them to take the battle to the Americans.

This was not at all what they had expected. They were being robbed of the advantage that the T-109M (M for missile, English designator) gave them. Moreover the lack of air cover had forced them to change their plans from the onset. True, they had brought vast quantities of SAM's and had the improved SA-7's but their supplies were not unlimited. All of this movement was beginning to put a strain on their fuel supplies, but unfortunately, or fortunately depending on how one looked at it the losses of their armor had counterbalanced the fuel usage.

The Chinese had weathermen, too and they were advised of the storm off the American coast. They weren't about to rush headlong into the mountains and be trapped by snow and fall prey to the American air forces. Their plan was a disaster and they agreed to remain in place, consolidate and get back to each other in a day to rethink their plan of attack.

In Jackson Hole, the south fence was going up at a blistering pace. The concrete for the tank traps was set up and Ray fairly marveled at the progress. The I-beams were being set in place and the road was becoming passable again as the grates were laid in place.

Ron had suggested that they put cutting charges on the I-beams and simply drop the grates, if needed. Scott and he had found an area where the dirt was at least 10' deep and now they could begin to haul soil to fill the eastern wall.

The road ended barely 2 miles past his property and there was no way he expected to be attacked from the north and west. Ray had pushed himself far too hard for a man of 73 and the exertions were beginning to show themselves. There had been a light moment, breaking the tension, when Ray, searching for an aspirin for a headache had discovered a bottle of red hair dye in Stacy's medicine chest. He had started to rib her about being vain and hiding the grey, but she had gone to his medicine chest and produced his bottle of Grecian Formula and that had ended that.

Stacy's grandchildren were a constant source of delight for her and she revealed to Ray that Jennifer was expecting again. That bit of news had gotten Ray to wondering about how Ryan was doing, wherever he was, and how the war was going. This news blackout was maddening. There was nothing on the TV or on the Internet; did this mean that the war was going badly? Well maybe not, that bad feeling that Ray usually got in his gut was still there, but was getting better.

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The interlude in the action lasted for a full week. The Northern command was safely formed up in the Spokane area, rested and re-supplied. The Central command had moved east of Reno and set up along I-80 stretching from the junction of US 50 to a point almost halfway to Winnemucca. Although there were mountains all around the I-80 corridor, the corridor itself was a long flat stretch. There were numerous choke points but they wanted to string the Chinese out, not bottle them up. They too were rested and re-supplied.

Rocky had his forces spread out in a fan shaped formation west of Blythe. Blythe was a choke point with its bridges across the Colorado River. It was also an ideal place to face off against the Chinese. Given the desert to the west of Blythe, the Chinese would no doubt resort to a conventional tank attack and the Apaches, the aging Warthogs and the fighters were just waiting.

The Chinese had been forced to commandeer American snow removal equipment to get through the passes. Had it been them, the Chinese would have destroyed the equipment in place, but the American equipment was fueled and ready to go. It was almost as if the Americans were inviting them to pursue. Very strange, but it set off no warning bells.

It appeared that the Americans would make a stand in the southern sector. In the central sector, they were into open territory, a good thing. In the northern sector, they had clear roads ahead all the way to the American city named Spokane. Most strangely, the Americans were not using a scorched earth policy and destroying fuel supplies and the like as they retreated.

True, they were evacuating populations ahead of the line of march, but they were leaving behind food and fuel for the Chinese. The final decision that Lance had reached was to use whatever approach suited the terrain for his three commands.

Rocky was going to stand and fight in the south, the General was going to continue the stringing out of the Chinese in Nevada and Ryan was going to draw the enemy further to the east, continuing to take advantage of the rugged terrain. Lance reported in to the acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, but that damned President had horned in on the call and had made some, well, what else could one call them, rather suggestive remarks.

### **Days 13-16 Southern Front**

The Chinese fanned out and came on just as expected. In a pitched battle that lasted nearly 3 days, Rocky's forces slowly decimated the Chinese. The Chinese put their best foot forward, using first the T-109M's and later the T-109C's (C for Conventional, English designator). The Apache gunships had a field day taking out the T-109's.

The M1A3 Abrams were every bit the match for the T-98's and slowly, inexorably, Rocky's forces whittled down the Chinese. The SAM's did the Chinese little good. The Americans used highflying B-2's to carpet bomb their infantry, dropping 34 CBU's per plane per pass.

Despite advances in radar, the planes were invisible to their SAM's and out of range of their SA-7's. It wasn't that the Americans had a lot of the planes, but they didn't have to spend much time on the ground between passes and their infantry and SAM's were being destroyed with each succeeding pass.

Eventually the Americans resorted to using their B-1B's and B-52's to carpet bomb with an ever-increasing intensity. Finally, just when the Chinese thought that they could take no more, the Americans brought in the C-130's with the huge bombs, the Daisy Cutter's and the MOAB's and the Chinese were forced to surrender.

There was no glory for either the Chinese or the Americans during those four days beginning on Day 13 on the southern front. It was just 90 odd hours of sheer pandemonium. And in the end, the battle had been won by air power. The Chinese commander got to experience what the Iraqis had experienced way back in the First Gulf War, a continuous wave of American might and a seemingly endless supply of bombs falling from the sky.

The Chinese commander had survived the battle and he alternatively referred to the events of those four days as the Black Rain and the Rain of Death. There weren't a lot of Chinese left living to take prisoner. Rocky rested his forces then mounted them up. They cut cross-country and picked up I-15 moving north to join up with central and northern commands, leaving a contingent behind to guard the Chinese prisoners.

## **Days 5-16 Benton Village**

With the completion of the tank traps, the installation of the cutting charges and all, Ray tried to rest. The incident with the hair dye had lightened his mood and the news of Jennifer's pregnancy was a joy; but Ray was getting tired. That gnawing in his gut had changed in character to something akin to indigestion and he'd finally given in and gone to see Jennifer about it.

He described his symptoms to Jennifer and she'd promptly examined him and taken an EKG. The EKG told a story that Ray didn't want to hear. He had avoided a full-blown heart attack by the narrowest of margins. The stress was killing him and like it or not, Jennifer prescribed bed rest and some medications. It was, she said, a do or die situation and she enlisted Stacy's help when Ray resisted.

Ray was not a good patient and Jennifer had finally had to sedate him to get him to rest. Jennifer faxed a copy of Ray's EKG to the doctor in Jackson and he confirmed her diagnosis. It was stress-induced beginnings of cardiac failure. He also confirmed her opinion that if they could keep Ray rested and could remove the stress Ray was good for another 15 years. Thus it came to pass that Ray was out of the preparations and apparently would miss any coming battle.

They could have transferred overall responsibility to Scott, or Ron or Rob, but they weren't getting any younger either. The overall all responsibility fell to another of the residents, a younger retired 22-year Gunnery Sergeant that Ray had induced to move to the second tract.

Gunny Roberts assessed the situation at Benton Village. Between Ryan's preparations and the steps that Ray had initiated, they stood a good chance of repelling an attack. The inner south fence was almost completed and he got the contractor to pour the foot-

ings for the eastern wall. They wouldn't have to face Chinese tanks, he figured, and any infantry assault would be suicidal for the Chinese. Especially if they could get the interior eastern wall completed.

Gunny didn't much care for the news blackout either, what was the President thinking? The enemy obviously knew what was happening on the front lines, why was she preventing the American public from knowing so that they could be prepared if the Chinese came their way?

Gunny knew what it must be like for Ray, laying in that bed, sedated. He took time on a daily basis to keep Ray informed of their progress in preparing for the worst. He omitted mention of any setbacks they experienced, they were actually few and far between, and brought Ray only the good news, brightening Ray's days. In Gunny's humble opinion, this would be the last war. The world was getting along so well these days and it was the dawning of a new age.

"Maybe," he thought, "It was the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, spoken of in that old rock-opera, what had it been called? *Hair*? Maybe, just maybe, peace would rule the planet. But first, they had to get there from where they were. How did that go?"

*When the moon is in the Seventh House  
And Jupiter aligns with Mars  
Then peace will rule the planets  
And love will steer the stars  
This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius  
Age of Aquarius  
Aquarius!  
Aquarius!  
Harmony and understanding  
Sympathy and trust abounding  
No more falsehoods or derisions  
Golden living dreams of visions  
Mystic crystal revelation  
And the mind's true liberation  
Aquarius!  
Aquarius!  
When the moon is in the Seventh House  
And Jupiter aligns with Mars  
Then peace will rule the planets  
And love will steer the stars  
This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius  
Age of Aquarius  
Aquarius!  
Aquarius!  
Aquarius!  
Aquarius!*



*<instrumental and tempo shift>*

*Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in*

*Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in*

*Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in*

The song was a protest song from the Vietnam era, before his time, but wouldn't it be lovely if it really were the dawning of the Age of Aquarius? He could live with that.

### **Days 13-16 Central Front**

The weather was finally on their side and the air forces had managed to take out the Chinese SAM's. Now they only had to contend with the SA-7's and the Air Force's F-22's and F-35s were having a very productive go at the Chinese.

The General was hearing of a pitched battle in the south, but the news was good. No news was coming from the Northern command and he wondered what that meant. Those damned Chinese tanks with their TOW missiles had taken out a lot of American tanks. And the tanks seemed to have improved armor on top of their turrets, rendering the CBU's only marginally effective.

However, when the Air Force had finally switched to JSOW's, the Chinese tanks began to fall. That gave his forces their opening and they flanked the Chinese tanks and laid waste to the T-98's. It was the beginning of the end for the Chinese forces on the Central Front.

The General tried to call in additional air support but it was all tied up on the Southern Front. He had to make do with what aircraft had been originally assigned to his command and control. They were in a pitched battle with the Chinese infantry and it was tough sledding.

When, finally, the Chinese tanks were taken out, the Air Force switched to different CBU's and began to attack the infantry. The three-day period saw the destruction of the Chinese armor and a significant reduction in the Chinese infantry, but this battle wasn't over yet.

### **Days 13-16 Northern Front**

Ryan was faced by an unending torrent of rainstorms. Just when it would clear up and the air forces could mount an attack, the rain would move in again. The bombing was sporadic and somewhat ineffective. To make matters worse, they were experiencing a problem with their long-range radios and were unable to communicate with anyone. Of

all the things to have happen, a lightning strike! Contrary to some assertions, Murphy was alive and well and with the Northern command.

Jennifer had suggested that she might be expecting, but was unsure; she was only a little late. Ryan had a million things going on in his head on the 13th Day. The early strategy had worked so well, but now they were in terrain that disallowed the use of the tanks. That would have been perfectly ok if only the weather would cooperate.

Lance was beginning to agree with Ryan and they talked it over and decided to make a long run to Montana. He didn't know that this would accidentally end up being a good move and trap the Chinese between their force and the southern force, which would soon begin moving up I-15 to join them. Sometimes, sheer dumb luck played a part in a war, and it was Lance's turn for a little sheer dumb luck. It took them through the end of the 16th Day to move to Butte. The Chinese trailed along behind them just like a good puppy.

### **Days 13-16 The Chinese**

The Chinese General in charge of the Southern sector thought he had the Americans by the throat at first. They were backed up against the Colorado River. He fanned out his forces and attacked. That damned American air power soon struck his force and that proved to be his undoing. First the Apache helicopters hit his 109's. Then the Americans rained down death from high above in the skies. His SAM missile batteries couldn't find a target to lock on to and soon fell to the American bombs.

Then the Americans began to use those cursed cluster bombs and he watched helplessly as, over a 3-day period, his command was all but wiped out. To add insult to injury he had been forced to surrender and was taken captive. He found himself alternatively referring to the events of those four days as the Black Rain and the Rain of Death. And for the life of him, he couldn't think of a single quote from Confucius to describe his situation.

The Chinese General in the Central sector had some initial success taking out the American tanks, but the US forces kept up a steady attack with their aircraft and slowly he began to lose his tank force. Then, when they had been wiped out, his forces got into a pitched battle with the American infantry.

He had no support for his infantry, but the Americans still had some tanks. It appeared to him that it was just a matter of time before they were defeated. Foot soldiers never really had much of a chance against other foot soldiers when only one side had tanks.

In the Northern sector, the weather had favored the Chinese General and kept the American airpower from inflicting serious damage on his forces. But the Americans were off and running again. Were they going to run all the way to the Atlantic Ocean?

He hoped not, his fuel reserves were starting to run low despite the fuel the Americans had so willingly seemed to abandon without destroying.

Maybe luck would favor him and he could run the Americans to ground. He lost contact with the forces in the Southern sector and didn't know what to make of it. The last he'd heard things were going badly for them. His colleague in the Central sector was having marginally better luck, but he had lost his tank force and was in a desperate battle with the American infantry. He didn't expect to win either, not anymore, but he wanted to take as many Americans with him as he could before he was defeated.

## **Day 16**

### **The White House**

The acting Chairman of the Joint Chief's was briefing the President.

"Madam President," he began, "It looks like you did well in picking General Soblick to run this campaign. General Marsten defeated the Chinese outside of Blythe. He indicated that he would be heading north to join the Central command and/or the Northern command. On the Central Front, it appears that we have taken out the Chinese tanks and it's down to an infantry duel."

"What about the Northern Front?" the President asked.

"We've been cut off from the Northern Front for 3 days Madam President," the Chairman said. "Some kind of a communications snafu. But, we've been following them by air and they appear to be moving towards Montana."

"I sure hope Lance is ok," the President commented.

The Admiral was a naval Aviator who had flown in the First Gulf War. He had narrowly escaped being drawn into the "Tail Hook Scandal" in Las Vegas in September of 1991. "What a Bimbo," he thought. "We finally get a female President and she has hot pants for some damned General. This will set back women's lib 50 years if it ever gets out." Is it ok to call the first female President a Bimbo, just because she acts like one? No offense, Madam Bimbo.

## **Day 17**

### **Central Front**

The Air Force shifted its assets from the Southern Front to the Central Front. It was a repeat of the previous day on the Southern Front and the Chinese infantry fell. The General reported the good news directly to the Joint Chiefs because he was unable to contact either Lance or Ryan with either his long-range or intermediate-range radios. The Chinese had capitulated early on this day. Perhaps they had been disheartened by

the news of the defeat of their comrades on the Southern Front a day earlier. The General didn't really care why they had given up, he was satisfied that they had.

### **Days 17-18 Northern Front**

Near the end of the 17th day, they received a shipment of new radios. It was only then that Lance and Ryan learned of the victories on the Southern and Central Fronts. Lance also learned that the Southern command was speeding northward on I-15 to join up with his force. This gave him an idea and he told Rocky that he would have Ryan fall back further along I-90 as it swung south into Wyoming.

Rocky should swing east when he hit I-90 and they would have the Chinese trapped between them. The Northern forces would stop at Casper and hold the Chinese, he said and Rocky could hit them from behind. They traveled all night and into the 18th Day to get into position. Then they halted just north of Casper to make their stand.

Ryan looked at the highway signs as they moved the force south on I-90 in northern Wyoming. Twice they passed highways that would have taken him home to his family and twice he'd had to suppress an urge to turn off and do just that. He was consumed with thoughts of the coming battle and of his family.

With any kind of luck, Benton Village would be spared from contact with the Chinese. But, for some reason he was getting a sinking feeling in his gut. What was that all about? He decided to detach a couple of companies of men and sent one company just west on US 16 to block any Chinese that might stray. He sent the other company back north to state route 343 with the same instructions. It was better to be safe than sorry.

### **Days 17-18 Benton Village**

Ray was feeling a lot better and he nagged Jennifer until she allowed him to get out of bed for some exercise. Ray was pleased to see that Gunny had pressed the contractor to work on the east fence. The contractor had started at both ends and in the middle and was making amazing progress. Ray didn't realize that Gunny had authorized the contractor to work 24/7.

As fast as the mortar set up, they were filling the fence with earth, too. It looked like the fence would be done in 24 hours and filled in 48. Now that was progress! When no one was paying particular attention, Ray sneaked his TAC-50 and a couple of cases of ammo to his hospital room and hid them in the closet. He was ready; let them come. Ray's gut was bothering him and it wasn't indigestion or his heart.

Gunny was very pleased with the contractor's progress. He just hoped Ray wouldn't blow a gasket when he got the bill from the contractor. At least he'd gotten the contractor to come down to \$33 a foot on 2nd shift and \$36 a foot on the graveyard shift. He was certain that if they were attacked, Ray would be very forgiving; but what if they weren't attacked? Would Ray be forgiving then? He supposed that he could always argue that they had been prepared, regardless.

## Mountain Man – Chapter 25 – Victory

Up to this point, Lance's plan had worked better than he had ever hoped. His idea was to draw the Chinese away from population centers in an effort to spare as much of the country's infrastructure as possible. His three commands had cleared a path and the Chinese had followed. In the process, his people had slowly picked off the Chinese until they got to a safe place to engage in battle.

He had counted on the Chinese having limited supplies and had even left them supplies to allow them to follow. He only made one minor miscalculation. Ryan had unconsciously sensed the miscalculation and had taken steps to allow for it when he sent those two companies to block the roads west from I-90.

Where I-90 joined I-25, the Americans had picked up I-25 and led the Chinese into the trap. When the Chinese got to the I-90/I-25 junction, they stopped. Which way had the Americans gone, east or south? While they waited for scouts to find the Americans, they paused long enough for Rocky's forces to pull within less than 50 miles to the rear of the Chinese column.

Advance elements of Rocky's main force met up with rearguard elements of the Chinese force and word went forward that the Americans were behind them, not in front of them. Having heard nothing from his scouts, the Chinese General had to make an uninformed decision. The Americans had steadily been moving to the east, so he elected to go south. One of his Battalion commanders suspected a trap and decided it was time to make a run and hide from the Americans.

The Battalion commander had a mixed command made up of remnants of other units. He had 2 companies of infantry and a company of armor, the T-98's. He swung his units to the west along US 16. They encountered a Company of American infantry, but because they had tanks, the Chinese battalion defeated the Americans and continued west towards the mountains. The Battalion commander had heard of a place called Jackson Hole and knew it to be mostly a wilderness. It was a perfect place to hide his forces.

The Chinese General was angry with his Battalion commander but he didn't have time to worry about one renegade. He got his forces moving south on I-25 and right into the trap set by Ryan and Lance. Rocky was moving as fast as possible, nipping at the Chinese rear guard. He didn't know about the Companies Ryan had sent out to protect state 343 and US 16 and passed them by. But the plan had worked.

The Chinese found themselves trapped between the two groups of Americans. The Chinese fought bravely until the helicopters and American aircraft ended any chance of victory by destroying their armor. The Chinese General capitulated and the war was over. The battle had lasted just under 48 hours.

The Americans were jubilant, in barely 3 weeks they had defeated a Chinese Army numbering 4.5 million. It was a feat unheard of in military history and Lance was already thinking about the Chairmanship of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Ryan, on the other hand, was thinking of getting out of this uniform and back to his family.

It was another 24 hours before Ryan remembered the two Companies he'd sent out to protect state route 343 and US 16. He was able to raise the Company protecting state route 343, but he couldn't raise the other Company. Ryan's gut was still bothering him and this gave him a very bad feeling.

Ryan contacted Rocky and had Rocky check on the Company on US 16. A report quickly came back that the company had been wiped out and that Rocky had a Battalion in hot pursuit. Ryan quickly pulled together a Battalion of his own and they headed west on US 20. The two Battalions met up in Shoshoni and headed for Jackson Hole.

They managed to raise Benton Village on the shortwave after hours of trying and warned them that a Battalion of Chinese, more or less, was headed their way. There wasn't time for any small chat and Ryan didn't learn either of Ray's near heart attack or that he was once more an expectant father. The Chinese had nearly a 72-hour jump on them and Ryan and Rocky moved their forces as fast as humanly possible.

## **Benton Village**

Gunny took the news in stride. A Battalion wasn't really all that big and they were very well prepared. The east wall was done and filled in; the tank traps were in place and they went to full alert. Gunny sort of felt sorry for the Chinese, the tank traps would put them on foot and Ryan and his friend Rocky were coming to the rescue.

They tried to keep the news from Ray, but that proved to be impossible and Ray showed up dragging his Tac-50 and two cases of Hornady ammo. What the hell, let the old warhorse have some fun Gunny decided and put Ray on top of the northeast community center.

Stacy got the M-24 and joined Ray.

"Well, babe, hopefully this will be our last battle," Ray suggested.

"Lord knows we've seen enough of those," Stacy agreed. "I never imagined when we got married that we'd spend the next 22 years fighting."

"Did you notice that Gunny has been walking around humming the music to that old song from the sixties?" Ray asked.

"That was sort of before my time, honey," Stacy reminded him. "What is that song he's been humming?"

“Oh, it was a protest song from a rock opera called *Hair*,” Ray explained. “Big hit for a group called *The Fifth Dimension*. Anyway, it was called something like *Age of Aquarius*’ I think that I have the movie on VHS or on a CD; I’m really not sure. It was kind of a dumb movie, but it made a statement. If we get through this ok, I’ll look for it and we can watch it.”

Ray and Stacy were still visiting when the cutting charges went off in the first pass dropping the cattle crossing and bottling up the Chinese tanks. Somehow the Chinese infantry managed to get past the cattle crossing and they came on. Gunny activated the cutting charge for the cattle crossing in the second pass, hoping to trap the Chinese.

He should have known better; if the Chinese had gotten past the first dropped cattle guard, what made him think that dropping the second set of grates would have any different result? It did slow them down, however, and everyone was ready when the Chinese began their assault on the Village.

Why, you might ask, would the Chinese attack the Village? They probably wouldn’t have had not some eager beavers began sniping at the Chinese. Gunny activated the NSD-A mines, both the anti-tank and the anti-personnel, and the battle was joined. The Chinese were armed with the RPG-7 along with its successor, the RPG-16, the main weapon of the Soviet soldier against enemy tanks. They were supplemented by the RPG-18, a copy of the M-72 66 mm light anti-tank weapon used by US and British forces.

The anti-tank weapons all but bounced off the 7’ thick walls. The two block walls with their 6’ filler of compacted earth might have bounced a tank shell, but thank goodness they didn’t have to find out. The residents almost outnumbered the attacking Chinese and the battle didn’t last very long. Protected as they were behind the walls, the residents made short shift of the Chinese and they were all dead or dying before Ryan and Rocky got to the Village. God did indeed favor the prepared.

## **The Aftermath**

Ryan resigned his commission right on the spot. He told Rocky to tell Lance thanks but no thanks he’d had enough. He was going to be a father again, and he had no interest in any future wars. There would be no future wars, not for a long time. Peace had embraced the planet and in a few years the Chinese would join the fold.

Ray and Stacy lived for a very long time. Ray was 90 when he passed in his sleep. They stopped expanding Benton Village; the market for survivalist type housing had finally disappeared. They laid Ray to rest alongside of Promise, and a few years later Stacy joined him.



Lance took the appointment as Chief of Staff of the Army and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That didn't last all that long. Madam President was not that bad of a looker and he bedded her, just as she had planned all along. But, he soon tired of the woman and resigned his commission. He ran into Rocky who had been promoted to Lt. General.

"Giving it up huh?" Rocky asked.

"Yep. I thought being Chairman was the ultimate goal," Lance admitted. "But that damned broad in the White House is insatiable. And, she's kinky besides."

"Kinky, huh?" Rocky replied, "I like kinky. Maybe I should volunteer to be the next Chairman."

Be careful what you wish for, Rocky, God has a sense of humor and he might just give you what you ask for.

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